

# C. H. Spurgeon

## Sermons from the Book of Job

### Volume 1

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# JOB'S RESIGNATION.

NO. 2457

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,  
MARCH 22ND, 1896,**

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 11TH, 1886.**

“Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.” — Job 1:20-22.

JOB was very much troubled, and he did not try to hide the outward signs of his sorrow. A man of God is not expected to be a stoic. The grace of God takes away the heart of stone out of his flesh, but it does not turn his heart into a stone. The Lord's children are the subjects of tender feelings; when they have to endure the rod, they feel the smart of its strokes; and Job felt the blows that fell upon him. Do not blame yourself if you are conscious of pain and grief, and do not ask to be made hard and callous. That is not the method by which grace works; it makes us strong to bear trial, but we have to bear it; it gives us patience and submission, not stoicism. We feel, and we benefit by the feeling, and there is no sin in the feeling, for in our text we are expressly told of the patriarch's mourning, “In all this Job sinned not.” Though he was the great mourner — I think I might truly call him the chief mourner — of Scripture, yet there was no sin in his mourning. Some there are who say that, when we are heavy of heart, we are necessarily in a wrong spirit, but it is not so. The apostle Peter

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saith, "If need be ye are in heaviness through manifold trials," but he does not imply that the heaviness is wrong. There are some who will not cry when God chastiseth them, and some who will not yield when God smiteth them. We do not wish to be like them; we are quite content to have the suffering heart that Job had, and to feel the bitterness of spirit, the anguish of soul which racked that blessed patriarch.

Furthermore, Job made use of very manifest signs of mourning. He not only felt sorrow within his heart, but he indicated it by rending his mantle, by shaving off the hair of his head, and by casting himself prone upon the ground, as if he sought to return to the womb of mother-earth as he said that he should; and I do not think we are to judge those of our brethren and sisters who feel it right to wear the common tokens of mourning. If they give them any kind of solace in their sorrow, let them have them. I believe that, at times, some go to excess in this respect, but I dare not pass sentence upon them because I read here, "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." If the crepe should be worn for a very long while, and if the sorrow should be nursed unduly, as others judge, yet we cannot set up a standard of what is right for others, each one must answer for his conduct to his own Lord. I remember the gentleness of Jesus towards mourners rather than his severity in dealing with them; he hath much pity for our weakness, and I wish that some of his servants had more of the same spirit. If you who are sorrowing could be strong, if the weeds of mourning could be laid aside, it might indicate a greater acquiescence in the divine will; but if you do not feel that it should be so with you, God forbid that we should rebuke you while we have such a text as this before us, "Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground;" and "in all this Job sinned not."

I want you, however, to notice that mourning should always be sanctified with devotion. It is very pleasant to observe that, when Job had rent his mantle after the Oriental custom, and shaved his head (in a manner which, in his day, was not forbidden, but which under the Mosaic law was prohibited, for they might not cut their hair by way of mourning as the heathen did), and, after the patriarch had fallen down upon the ground, he "worshipped." Not, he grumbled; not, he lamented; much less that he began to imprecate and use language unjustifiable and improper; but he "fell down upon the ground, and worshipped." O dear friend, when thy grief presses thee to the very dust, worship there! If that spot has come to be thy Gethsemane, then present there thy "strong crying and tears" unto

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thy God. Remember David's words, "Ye people, pour out your hearts," - but do not stop there, finish the quotation, — "Ye people, pour out your hearts before him." Turn the vessel upside down; it is a good thing to empty it, for this grief may ferment into something more sour. Turn the vessel upside down, and let every drop run out; but let it be before the Lord. "Ye people, pour out your hearts before him: God is a refuge for us." When you are bowed down beneath a heavy burden of sorrow, then take to worshipping the Lord, and especially to that kind of worshipping

which lies in adoring God, and in making a full surrender of yourself to the divine will, so that you can say with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." That kind of worshipping which lies in the subduing of the will, the arousing of the affections, the bestirring of the whole mind and heart, and the presentation of oneself unto God over again in solemn consecration, must tend to sweeten sorrow, and to take the sting out of it. It will also greatly alleviate our sorrow if we then fall into serious contemplations, and begin to argue a little, and to bring facts to bear upon our mind. Evidently Job did so, for the verses of my text are full of proofs of his thoughtfulness. The patriarch brings to his own mind at least four subjects for earnest consideration, out of which he drew great comfort. In like manner, you will do well, not merely to sit still and say, "I shall be comforted," but you must look about you for themes upon which to think and meditate to profit. Your poor mind is apt to be driven to and fro by stress of your sorrow; if you can get anchor-hold of some great clearly ascertained truths, about which you can have no possible doubt, you may begin to derive consolation from them. "While I was musing," said David, "the fire burned," and it comforted and warmed him. Remember how he talked to himself as to another self, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." There are two Davids, you see, talking to one another, and cheering one another! A man ought always to be good company for himself, and he ought also to be able to catechise himself; he who is not fit to be his own schoolmaster is not fit to be schoolmaster to other people. If you cannot catechise your own heart, and drill a truth into your own soul, you do not know how to teach other people. I believe that the best preaching in the world is that which is done at home. When a sorrowing spirit shall have comforted itself, it will have learned the art of consoling other people. Job is an instance of

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this kind of personal instruction; he has three or four subjects which he brings before his own mind, and these tend to comfort him.

**I.** The first is, to my mind, THE EXTREME BREVITY OF LIFE.

Observe what Job says, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither." He came forth, and he expected to go back to mother-earth, and there to lie. That is Job's idea of life, and a very true one it is, "*I come forth, and I go back again.*" One asked a man of God, one day, "Will you tell me what life is?" The man of God stopped just a moment, and then deliberately walked away. When his friend met him, the following day, he said to him, "Yesterday, I asked you a question, and you did not answer it." "But I did answer it," said the godly man. "No," rejoined the other "you were there, and you were gone." "Well, you asked me what life was, and that was my answer. Could I have answered your question better?" He answered and acted wisely, for that is a complete summary of our life here below, — We come, and we go. We appear for a brief moment, and then we vanish away. I often, in my own mind, compare

life to a procession. I see you, dear friends, going by me one by one, and vanishing, and others come on behind; but the point that I am apt to forget — and you do the same, — is that I am in the procession, and you are in it, too. We all count all men mortal but ourselves, yet all are marching towards that country from whose bourn no traveler returns.

Well now, because life is so short, do you not see where the comfort comes? Job says to himself, ‘I came, and I shall return; then why should I worry myself about what I have lost? I am going to be here only a little while, then what need have I of all those camels and sheep?’

So, brethren, what God has given us, is so much spending-money on our journey, to pay our own fares, and to help our fellow-travelers; but we do not, any of us, need as much substance as Job had. He had seven thousand sheep. Dear me! what a task it must have been to drive and to feed such a large flock! “And three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen!” That is, a thousand oxen. “And five hundred she asses, and a very great household.” Our proverb says, “The more servants, the more plagues;” and I am sure it is true that the more camels, the more horses, the more cows, the more of such things that a man has, the more there is to look after, and to cause him trouble. So Job seems to say to himself, “I am here for such a little time, why should I be carried away, as with a flood, even when these things are taken from me? I come and I go; let me be satisfied if other

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things come and go. If my earthly stores vanish, well, I shall vanish, too. They are like myself; they take to themselves wings, and fly away; and by-and-by I too shall take to myself wings, and I shall be gone.” I have heard of one who called life, “the long disease of life”; and it was so to him, for, though he did a great work for his Master, he was always sickly. Well, who wants a long disease? “There’s the respect that makes calamity of so long life.” We want rather to feel that it is not long, that it is short, and to set small store by all things here below, and to regard them as things which, like ourselves, appear but for a time, and soon shall be gone.

Further, Job seems especially to dwell with comfort upon the thought, “*I shall return to the earth*, from which all the Particles of my body originally came; I shall return thither.” “Ah!” said one, when he had seen the spacious and beautiful gardens of a wealthy man, “these are the things that make it hard to die.” You recollect how the tribe of Gad and the tribe of Reuben went to Moses, and said, “If we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan.” Of course, they did not want to cross the Jordan if they could get all their possessions on the other side. But Job had not anything this side Jordan, he was cleaned right out, so he was willing to go. And, really, the losses that a man has, which make him “desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better,” are real gains. What is the use of all that clogs us here? A man of large possessions reminds me of my experience when I have gone to see a friend in the country, and he has taken me across a ploughed field, and I have had two heavy burdens of earth, one on each foot, as I have plodded on. The earth has clung to me, and made it hard walking. It is just so with

this world, its good things hamper us, clog us, cling to us, like thick clay; but when we get these hampering things removed, we take comfort in the thought, "We shall soon return to the earth whence we came." We know that it is not mere returning to earth, for we possess a life that is immortal, we are looking forward to spending it in the true land that floweth with milk and honey, where, like Daniel we shall stand in our lot at the end of the days; therefore, we feel not only resigned to return to the womb of mother-earth, but sometimes we even long for the time of our return to come. A dear servant of God, whom you would all recognize if I mentioned his name, was talking with me concerning our dear departed brother, Hugh Stowell Brown, and he said, "All the brethren of my age and yours seem to be going home; they are passing away, the fathers and the leaders are going, and I could almost wish," he added, "that our Heavenly

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Father would put my name down as the next to go." I said that I hoped the Lord would not do so, but that our brother might be spared to labor a while longer here; but that, if I might put in another name, I would plead for my own to go in there instead of his. Happily, we have nothing to do with the date of our home-going, it is out of our hands; yet we are glad to feel that, when the time of our departure shall arrive, it will be no calamity, but a distinct advancement, for the Master to bid us to return to the dust whence we came. "Return, ye children of men," he will say, and we will joyfully answer, "Yes, Father, here we are, glad to stretch our wings, and fly straight to yonder world of joy, expecting that even our poor bodies, by-and-by, at the trump of the archangel, shall come back to thee, and we shall be like thine only-begotten Son, when we shall see him as he is."

**II.** Secondly, Job seems to comfort himself by noticing THE TENURE OF HIS EARTHLY POSSESSIONS. "Naked," says he, "came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither."

He feels himself to be very poor, everything is gone, he is stripped; yet he seems to say, "*I am not poorer now than I was when I was born.*" I had nothing then, not even a garment to my back but what the love of my mother provided for me. I was helpless then; I could not do anything for myself whatever." One said to me, the other day, "It is gone, sir, all is gone, except health and strength." Yes, but we had not as much as that when we were born. We had no strength, we were too weak to perform the least though most necessary offices for our poor tender frame. David often very sweetly dwells upon his childhood, and still more upon his infancy; and we shall do well to imitate him. Old men sometimes arrive at a second childhood. Do not be afraid, brother, if that is your case; you have gone through one period already that was more infantile than your second one can be, you will not be weaker then than you were at first. Suppose that you and I should be brought to extreme weakness and poverty, we shall neither be weaker nor poorer than we were then. "But I had a mother," says one. Well, there are some children who lose their mother in their very birth; but if you had a mother to care for you then, you have a

Father to care for you now; and, as a child of God, you surely feel that your mother was but the secondary agent to watch over you in your weakness; and God who gave that love to her, and moved her to care for you, will be sure to find that same love which flowed out of him into her still stored up in his own bosom, and he will see you through. Do not be afraid, my brother, my sister, the Lord will see you through. It is wonderful

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that, after God has been gracious to us for fifty years, we cannot trust him for the rest of our lives; and as for you who are sixty, seventy, or eighty years of age, what! has he brought you thus far to put you to shame? Did he bear you through that very weakest part of your life, and do you think he will now forsake you? David said, ‘I was cast upon thee from the womb,’ as if then he had none but God to help him; and will not he who took care of us then take care of us even to the end? Ay, that he will; wherefore, let us be of good courage, and let the poverty and weakness of our infancy, as we think of it, cheer us if we are weak and poor now. Then Job adds, ‘However poor I may be, I am not as poor as I shall be, for naked shall I return to mother-earth. *If I have but little now, I shall soon have still less.*’ We have heard of a rustic who, when dying, put a crownpiece into his mouth, because he said that he would not be without money in another world; but then he was a clown, and everyone knew how foolish was his attempt thus to provide for the future. There have been stories told of persons who have had their gold sewn up in their shrouds, but they took not a penny with them for all their pains. Nothing can be taken with us; we must go back to the earth, the richest as poor as the poorest, and the poorest no poorer, really, than the richest. The dust of great Caesar may help to stop a hole through which the blast blows, and the dust of his slave cannot be put to more ignoble uses. No, poor and weak as we may be, we are not as poor and weak as we shall be by-and-by; so let us just solace ourselves with this reflection. The two ends of our life are nakedness; if the middle of it should not always be scarlet and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day, let us not wonder; and if it should seem to be all of a piece, let us not be impatient or complaining.

I want you to notice, also, what I think really was in Job’s mind, that, notwithstanding that he was but dust at the beginning, and would be dust at the end, yet, still, there was a Job who existed all the while. ‘I was naked, but *I was*; naked shall I return thither, *but I shall be there.*’ Some men never find themselves till they have lost their goods. They, themselves, are hidden away, like Saul, among the stuff; their true manhood is not to be seen, because they are dressed so finely that people seem to respect them, when it is their clothes that are- respected. They appear to be somebodies, but they are nobodies, notwithstanding all that they possess. The Lord brought his servant Job to feel, ‘Yes, when I had those camels, when I had those she asses, when I had those sheep, when I had those men-servants, they were not myself; and now that they are gone, I am the same Job that

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ever I was. The sheep were not a part of myself, the camels were not a part

of myself; I, Job, am here still, lying in my wholeness and integrity before God, as much a servant of Jehovah, in my nakedness, as I was when I wrapped myself in ermine." O sirs, it is a grand thing when God helps us to live above what we have, and above what we have not! Then it is that he brings us to know ourselves as we are, in our God, not dependent upon externals, but maintained and strengthened by food of which the world knoweth nothing, which cometh not from milk of kine. Then are we robed in a garment that cometh not from fleece of sheep, and we possess a life that dependeth not on the swift dromedary, a true existence that is neither in flocks, nor herds, nor pastures, nor fields, but delights itself in God, and stays itself on the Most High. "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither," says Job, but "still it is I, the blessed of God, his same devoted servant, who will trust him to the end." That was good talk for Job's heart, was it not? Though it may not all have been said in words, I doubt not that something like it, or something much better, passed through the patriarch's mind, and thus he solaced himself in the hour of his sorrows and losses.

**III.** But now, thirdly, and perhaps the most blessed thing, is what Job said concerning THE HAND OF GOD IN ALL THINGS: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

I am so pleased to think that Job recognized *the hand of God everywhere giving*. He said, "The Lord gave." He did not say, "I earned it all." He did not say, "There are all my hard-earned savings gone." "Ah, me!" he might have said, "all the care for those sheep, and the dreadful expense of those camels, and the trouble that I have been at with those oxen; and now they are all gone, it does seem hard." He does not put it so, but he says, "The Lord gave them to me; they were a gift, and though they are gone, they were a gift from him who had a right to take them back, for all he gives is only lent. 'A loan should go laughing home;' and if God lent me these things, and now has called them back, I will bless his name for having let me have them so long."

What a sweet thing it is, dear brothers and sisters, if you can feel that all you have in this world is God's gift to you! You cannot feel that, you know, if you came by it dishonestly. No, it is not God's gift then, and it brings no blessing with it; but *that which is honestly the result and fruit of your cheerful industry*, you may consider has come from God; and if, in

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addition, you have really sanctified your substance, and have given your fair proportion to help the poor and the needy, as Job did, if you can say that you have caused the widow's heart to sing for joy when you relieved her wants, then all that you have is God's gift. God's providence is man's inheritance, and your inheritance has come to you from God's providence. Look at it all as God's gift; it will sweeten even that little loaf of bread and that tiny pat of butter, — which is all you will have to eat to-day or tomorrow, — if you regard it as God's gift. It will soften that hard bed upon which you lie, wishing that you were somewhat better covered from the



cold, if you think of it as God's gift. A slender income will give us much content if we can see that it is God's gift.

Let us not only regard our money and our goods as God's gifts; but also our wife, our children, our friends. What precious gifts they often are! A man is truly rich who has a good help-meet; he is really rich who has godly children about him. Even though they may cost him much care, he is abundantly repaid by their affection; and if they grow up in the fear of the Lord, what a choice gift they are! Let us look at them all as God's gifts; let us not see them or anything else about the house without feeling, "My Father gave me this." Surely it will tend to draw the teeth of every sharp affliction if, while you have enjoyed the possession of your good things, you have seen God's hand in giving them to you.

Alas! some of you do not know anything about God. What you have, is not counted by you as God's gift. You miss the very sweetness and joy of life by missing this recognition of the divine hand in giving us all good things richly to enjoy.

But then, *Job equally saw God's hand in taking them away*. If he had not been a believer in Jehovah, he would have said, "Oh, those detestable Sabeans! Somebody ought to go and cut to pieces those Chaldeans." That is often our style, is it not? — finding fault with the secondary agents. Job has nothing to say about the Sabeans or the Chaldeans, or the wind, or the lightning. "The Lord," said he, "the Lord hath taken away." I believe that Satan intended to make Job feel that it was God who was at work when his messenger said, "The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep." "Ah!" said Satan, "he will see that God is against him." The devil did not succeed as he thought he had done, for Job could see that it was God's hand, and that took away the sting of the stroke. "The Lord hath taken away." Aaron held his peace when he knew that the Lord had

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done it, and the psalmist said, "I was dumb with silence, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it;" and Job felt just that. "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." Never mind the secondary agents, do not spend your strength in kicking against this bad man or that; he is responsible to God for all the evil he has done, but at the back of these free agents there is a divine predestination, there is an over-ruling hand, and even that which in men is evil may, nevertheless, in another light, be traced up distinctly to the hand of the Most High. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away."

Will you recollect that with regard to your children? If Job had lost his eldest son alone, he might have needed much grace to say, "The Lord gave him, and the Lord hath taken him away." Job *had* lost his eldest son, but he had lost six more sons, and he had lost his three daughters as well. I have known a mother say, "My two dear boys sickened and died within a week; I am the most tried woman who ever lived." Not quite, not quite, dear friend; there have been others who have excelled you in this respect. Job lost his ten children at a stroke. O Death, what an insatiable archer thou wast that day, when ten must fall at once! Yet Job says, "The Lord hath

taken away.” That is all he has to say about it: “The Lord hath taken away.” I need not repeat to you the story of the gardener who missed a choice rose, but who could not complain because the master had plucked it. Do you feel that it is just so with all that you have, if he takes it? Oh, yes! why should he not take it? If I were to go about my house, and take down an ornament or anything from the walls, would anybody say a word to me? Suppose my dear wife should say to the servant, “Where has that picture gone?” and the maid replied, “Oh, the master took it!” Would she find fault? Oh, no! If it had been a servant who took it down, or a stranger who removed it, she might have said something; but not when I took it, for it is mine. And surely we will let God be Master in his own house; where we are only the children, he shall take whatever he pleases of all he has lent us for a while. It is easy to stand here and say this; but, brothers and sisters, let us try to say it if it should ever come to us as a matter of fact that the Lord who gave should also take away. I think Job did well to call attention to this blessed truth, that the hand of God is everywhere at work, whether in giving or in taking away; I do not know anything that tends more to reconcile us to our present sorrows, and losses, and crosses, than to feel, “God has done it all. Wicked men were the agents, but still God himself has done it. There is a great mystery about it which I cannot clear up, and I

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do not want to clear it up. God has done it, and that is enough for me. “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.”

IV Job’s last comfort lay in this truth, that GOD IS WORTHY TO BE BLESSED IN THINGS: “Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Dear friends, *let us never rob God of his praise, however dark the day is.* It is a funeral day, perhaps; but should not God be praised, when there is a funeral, as well as when there is a wedding? “Oh, but I have lost everything!” And is this one of the days when there is no praise due to God? Most of you know that the Queen’s taxes must be paid; and our great’s revenue has the first claim upon us. Let us not rob our King of the revenue of his praise. “From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the Lord’s name is to be praised.” “Oh, but I have lost a child!” Yes, but God is to be praised. “But I have lost my mother.” Yes, but God is to be praised “I have a bad headache.” Yes, but God is to be praised. One said to me, one evening, “We should have family prayer, my dear sir, but it is rather late; do you feel too tired to conduct it?” “No,” I said, “I never was too tired yet to pray with my brethren, and I hope I never shall be.” If it is the middle of the night, let us not go to bed without prayer and praise, for we must not rob God of his glory. “There is a mob in the street,” but we must not rob God of his glory. “Our goods are getting cheaper and cheaper, and we shall be ruined in the market,” but let us not rob God of his glory. “There is going to be, I do not know what, happening by-and-by.” Yes, but we must not rob God of his glory. “Blessed be the name of the Lord.” Job means that *the Lord is to be blessed both for giving and taking.* “The Lord gave,” blessed be his name. “The Lord hath taken away,” blessed be his name. Surely it has not come

to this among God's people, that he must do as we like, or else we will not praise him. If he does not please us every day, and give way to our whims, and gratify our tastes, then we will not praise him. "Oh, but I do not understand his dealings," says one. And are you really such a stranger to God, and is God such a stranger to you, that, unless he enters into explanations, you are afraid that he is not dealing fairly with you? O sir, have you known the Lord for twenty years, and cannot you praise him for everything? Brethren, some of us have known him forty years now, perhaps some of you have known the Lord for fifty years; are you always wanting to have chapter, and verse, and explanations from him before you will praise him? No, no, I hope we have gone far beyond that stage.

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God is, however, *specially to be praised by us whenever we are moved by the devil! to curse*. Satan had said to the Lord concerning Job, "Put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face;" and it seemed as if God had hinted to his servant that this was what the devil was aiming at. "Then," said Job, "I will bless him." His wife suggested afterwards that he should curse God, but he would do no such thing, he would bless him. It is usually a wise thing to do the very opposite to what the evil one suggests to you. If he says, "Curse," do you bless. Remember the story of a man who was going to give a pound to some charitable institution. The devil said, "No, you cannot afford it." "Then," said the man, "I will give two pounds; I will not be dictated to in this way." Satan exclaimed, "You are a fanatic." The man replied, "I will give four pounds." "Ah!" said Satan, "what will your wife say when you go home, and tell her that you have given away four pounds?" "Well," said the man, "I will give eight pounds now; and if you do not mind what you are at, you will tempt me to give sixteen." So the devil was obliged to stop, because the more he tempted him, the more he went the other way. So let it be with us. If the devil would drive us to curse God, let us bless him all the more, and Satan will be wise enough to leave off tempting when he finds that, the more he attempts to drive us, the more we go in the opposite direction. This is all meant to be sweet, cheery talk to suffering saints; how I wish that everybody here had an interest in it! What will some of you do, what are some of you doing, now that you have lost all, — wife dead, children dead, and you are growing old, yet you are without God? O you poor rich people, who have no interest in God, your money must burn your souls! But you poor, poor, poor people, who have not anything here, and have no hope hereafter, how sad is your case! May God of his rich mercy, give you even a little common-sense, for, surely, common-sense would drive you to him! Sometimes, in distributing temporal relief, we meet with persons who have been out of work, and full of trouble, and have not had bread to eat, and we say to them, "Did you ever cry to God for help?" "No, sir, we never prayed in all our life." What are you at? Here is a child, crawling about a house, shivering for want of bread and clothes. "Did you never ask your father for anything?" "No, never." Come, friend, did God make you, or did you grow without him? Did God create you? If he made you, he will

have respect unto the work of his hands. Go and try him, even on that low ground. Go and seek his face even as his creature, and see whether he does not help you. O unbelief, to what madness dost thou go, that even when

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men are driven to starvation, they will not turn to God! O Spirit of God bless the sons of men! Even through their fears, and sorrows, and losses, bless them, and bring them in penitence to the Savior's feet, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

## EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

**JOB 1:6-22.**

**Verse 6.** *Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.*

Angels and all kinds of intelligent spirits had, as it were, a special, solemn, general assembly, — a great field-day, or *levee*. Perhaps, in stars far remote, in various parts of the universe, there was celebrated that day a high festival of honor unto Jehovah, but since sin has come into the world, since even amongst the twelve apostles there was a Judas, so in every assembly, even though it be an assembly of the sons of God, there is sure to be a devil: "Satan came also among them." If he is not anywhere else, he is sure to be where the sons of God are gathered together. Yet what impudence this is on his part, that he dares to come even into the assemblies of the saints! And what hardness of heart he must have, for he comes in as a devil, and he goes out as a devil! The sons of God offer their spiritual prayers inspired by the Holy Ghost, but the devil offers diabolical petitions suggested by his own malice.

**7.** *And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou?*

He is obliged to give an account of himself, he cannot go a yard from his door without divine permission.

**7.** *Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.*

Satan is always busy, never quiet; he cannot be still.

**8.** *And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job,*

—

You see, Job is a man whom God calls his servant even in speaking to the devil, "Hast thou considered my servant Job?"

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**8.** *That there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?*

God himself gives Job that high character. He is a non-such, he stands alone amongst mankind: "There is none like him in the earth." "Hast thou reckoned him up? Hast thou taken his measure, O thou accuser of the brethren?"

**9.** *Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?*

Even the devil could not bring a charge against Job's conduct; so he insinuated that his motives were not pure.

**10.** *Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?*

'He finds that it pays, it answers his purpose to be devout.'

**10-11.** *Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hash, and he will curse thee to thy face.*

See, the devil measures Job's cow in his own bushel; but, happily, it was the measurement of a liar, so he measured amiss. There are still some who say, "Yes, it is a fine thing to be good when you are rich; it is a very easy thing to behave yourself aright when all goes smoothly with you. Would the man, who is such a devout servant of God now, be like that if he were in poverty, or if he were cruelly slandered, or if he were tested with contempt? Would the grace of God carry him over those rough bridges? His religion is a fine thing, no doubt; but if he were tried and tested we should see what he would do." Now, the Lord delights in proving the graces of his people, for it brings great glory to his name when experiments are made upon them, to test them and try them, and to let even their greatest adversary know how true they are, and what a divine work it is which God has wrought upon them.

**12.** *And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand.*

Satan could go so far, but no farther, there is an "only" in the permission granted to him: "Only upon himself put not forth thine hand."

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**12, 13.** *So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD. And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house:*

That was a bad day for trouble to come. Satan selected that day because it was a joyful day, and therefore it would make the trials of Job the more startling. Moreover if Job could have had his choice, he would have preferred that his trouble should come when his sons and his daughters were praying, not when they were feasting.

**14, 15.** *And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: and the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*

The bad news comes to him all of a sudden, just when he is thinking of something very different. There is only one servant left to tell the tale, he was spared that Job might know that the news was true. If that one other servant had been killed, the tidings could only have reached Job as a rumor, that might or might not be true, but now, one of his own servants tells him the sad story, so there is no mistake about it. Ah! the devil knows how and where to strike when he does strike; yet this was only the first blow for

poor Job, and there were heavier ones to follow.

**16.** *While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*

Now, if that lightning had fallen on the Sabeans while they were robbing and plundering, one might not have wondered; but to fell on the flocks of a man of God who had clothed the naked with the fleeces of his sheep, and had presented many of the fat of the flock unto God in sacrifice, — that did seem strange. This trial, too, comes right upon the back of the other, and this one would appear to be more severe than the former one because it seemed to come distinctly from God. “The fire of God” — the lightning, ‘is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep.’”

**17.** *While he was yet speaking there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*

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Three such heavy blows will surely be enough to test the patriarch, but a fourth messenger came with the direst news of all.

**18-19.** *While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother’s house: and, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*

Did any other man ever have to endure such a complication of trouble, such agonies piled one upon another with no respite? Job must have felt well-nigh stunned and choked by these consecutive griefs.

**20-22.** *Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.*

Oh, the triumphs of almighty grace! May God grant us such patience, if he sends us such trials, and unto him shall be the glory evermore!

## FIFTEEN YEARS AFTER!

NO. 3025

This title has been selected in order to call special attention to the fact that the Sermon is published exactly *fifteen years after* the beloved preacher was “called home” on January 3 1st, 1892. The subject is as singularly appropriate to the anniversary of that nevertobe-forgotten period as the Sermons which were issued at the time of Mr. Spurgeon’s death and funeral, viz., *No. 2,242, “God’s Will about the Future;” No. 2,243, “His Own Funeral Sermon;” No. 2,244. “Members of Christ;” and No. 2,245, “Living, Loving, Lasting Union.”* (See also Note accompanying Mr. Spurgeon’s

portrait a few pages later.’)

**A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY,  
JANUARY FIRST, 1907,  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEB. 11TH, 1869.**

*“The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away;  
blessed be the name of the LORD.” — Job 1:21.*

OR, as some read it, “The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” So that, the text is not only concerning the past, but it may rightly be considered as relating to the present also. Some of the rarest pearls have been found in the deepest waters, and some of the choicest utterances of believers have come from them when God’s waves and billows have been made to roll over them. The fire consumes nothing but the dross, and leaves the gold all the purer. In Job’s cause, I may truly say, with regard to his position before God, he had lost nothing by all his losses, for what could be purer and brighter gold than this which gleams  
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before us from our text, revealing his triumphant patience, his complete resignation, and his cheerful acquiescence in the divine will? “The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” There are two points to which I ask your earnest attention while we meditate upon this subject. The first is the exhortation drawn from the text, — *learn to see the Lord’s hand in everything*, in giving and in taking; and, secondly, — and this is a harder lesson, — *learn to bless the Lord’s name in everything*, in giving and in taking.

**I.** First, LET US LEARN TO SEE THE LORD’S HAND IN EVERYTHING.

Our whole history seems to be divided, as our text divides itself, into a beholding of God’s hand in giving, and then a beholding of it in taking. We are then, first of all, to behold God’s hand as a giving hand. If we are believers, all the comforts and mercies that we have are to be viewed by us as coming from the hand of our gracious Heavenly Father. Job confessed that the Lord had given him the camels, and the sheep, and the oxen, and that the Lord had given him his seven sons and three daughters; everything which he had ever possessed he looked upon as having been the gift of God. Job did not say, “I worked hard to obtain all that stock that I have now lost.” He did not complain, “I spent many weary days and many anxious nights in accumulating all those flocks and herds that have been stolen from me.” He did not ascribe any of his wealth either to his own wit, or to his own industry, but he said of it all, “The Lord gave it to me.” In his mind’s eye, he took an inventory of all that he once had, and of all that, he had lost, and he said of the whole, “It was all the Lord’s gift to me.”



Now, beloved, whatever may be the possessions which you have at the present time, whatever may be the number of those who are the comfort of your life, husband or wife, parents or children, kinsfolk of any sort, — say of all of them, “The Lord gave them to me;” and, as a Christian, *learn the wisdom of never ascribing any earthly comfort to any earthly source.* The worldling may not always be able to say what Job said concerning his possessions. Some of what he has may not have been obtained honestly; the Lord did not give any of that to him. Some of what he has may turn out to be a curse rather than a blessing; but the believer in Christ may say, with the utmost truthfulness, with regard to all that he has, “It is all the gift of my loving and tender Heavenly Father.”

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And, brethren, there is associated with this fact that all our possessions are God’s gifts, the remembrance that *they are all undeserved gifts.* They are gifts in the fullest sense of the word, the gifts of God’s grace. They are not given to us because we have merited them, for we have never deserved even the least of all the mercies which the Lord has so bountifully bestowed upon us. We may say of the whole river of his favor, which flows continually side by side with us as we journey along the pathway of our pilgrimage, that there is not a drop of it which comes to us of debt or by law, but all comes through the free gift of God’s grace. All that we have, over and above what would have been our portion in the pit of hell, is the gift of God’s mercy towards us. It is of the Lord’s mercy, and because his compassions fail not, that we are not consumed. Every believer can truly say, with Job, “The Lord gave, yes, the Lord gave even to me, an unworthy one who sat as a beggar at his gate, and received from his own hand countless tokens of his infinite lovingkindness.”

And I may add, with regard to those gifts, that *they have been given to us with wondrous kindness and thoughtfulness on God’s part.* Some here, I think, will have to say that they have found themselves provided for by God’s forestalling their wants. He has gone before them in the way of his providence, and mysteriously cleared a path for them. Before they have felt the pinch of poverty, the pinch has been averted. There are others of God’s servants here, who have sometimes been brought very low, yet they can bear witness that, hitherto, their bread has always been given to them, and their waters have been sure; and while God’s mercy comes to us very sweetly when forestalling our need, there is equal sweetness if it comes when the need has been felt. No food is so palatable as that which has hunger for its sauce. To know what it is to be poor, will make us more grateful if God ever gives us abundance. But time would fail me to tell me the love and care of God towards each one of us, every day of our lives, and to recount how he not only continues but even multiplies his favors. It is impossible for us to count them, for they are more in number than the hairs of our head, or the sand on the seashore, or the stars in the midnight sky.\* \*See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, No. 3,022, ‘God’s Innumerable Mercies.’*

Now, as everything we have is freely and graciously given to us by God,

this should make us feel, in the first place, that *this truth sweetens all that we have*. I daresay there is many a little thing in your house that is of no great value in itself, but it was given to you by someone who was very dear

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to you. How much a child values that Bible that was given to her by her mother, who wrote her name in it! Many a man has, in his house, things which an auctioneer would appraise at a very small amount, but which the owner prizes very highly because they were given to him by someone whom he intimately esteemed, and who gave them to him, as a token of his love. In like manner, look at the bread on the table of a believer as a lovetoken from God. The Lord gave it to him; and if there were upon his table nothing but that bread, it would be a token of God's gracious condescension in providing for his needs. Let us learn to look thus at everything that we receive in this life, for such a view of it will sweeten it all. We shall not then begin to calculate whether we have as much as others have, or as much as our own whims or wishes might crave; but we shall recognize that all we have comes from the hand and heart of our Heavenly Father, and that it all comes to us as a token of our Father's love, and with our Father's blessing resting upon it.

This fact should also *prevent any believer from acting dishonestly in his daily avocations*, or even from wishing to obtain anything that is not his own by right. All of you, who belong to God, have what God has given you; so mind that you do not mix with it anything that the devil has given you. Do not go into any worldly enterprise, and seek to gain something concerning which you could not say, "The Lord my God gave it unto me." Men of the world will engage in such transactions, and they will say that you are not as sharp as you might be because you will not do the same. But you have a good reason for refusing to gain even a shilling upon which you cannot ask God's blessing. A sovereign, dishonestly procured, though, it might gladden your eyes for a little while, and help to fill your purse, would certainly bring a curse with it, and you do not want that. You would not like to have to confess to yourself, concerning anything you possessed, "I dare not tell my Heavenly Father how I got it, though he knows; and I dare not ask his blessing upon it, nor do I think he would ever give it to me. He will probably turn it into a rod, and sharply scourge me for having dared to use such unholy means to get what I ought not to have even wished to possess." Some of God's people might have been very happy if they had not been greedy and grasping. He that hasteneth to be rich will soon find that he will fall into many snares and abundant temptations. It is an evil thing when people cannot be content although they have enough for all their necessities, for even the world's proverb says, that "enough is as good as a feast." Yet many stretch out their arms, like wide-

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encircling seas, and try to grasp in them all the shore. Such people, sooner or later, begin to rob others right and left, and very many of them come down to poverty and the Bankruptcy Court, disgraced and dishonored. Let it not be so with you, beloved, but be ye content with such things as ye have, whether God gives

you little or much; and, above all things, pray that you may have nothing but what he gives you, nothing in your house or shop but what comes in at the front door in the light of day, nothing but what may be seen coming in if any eye should be watching. That man is truly happy who can say of all his substances, be it little or be it much, "The Lord gave it to me."

Further, as it is the Lord who gives us all the wealth that we possess, *how very foolish are those people who are proud of possessing a little more of this world's wealth than others have!* There are some, who seem to be thoroughly intoxicated by the possession of a larger income than their neighbors enjoy. They even seem to fancy that they were made of better material than was used in the creation of ordinary mortals. Did not a broad grin appear on the faces of many aristocrats when someone said, in Parliament, that we were all made of the same flesh and blood? Of course, all those who were in their right senses, knew that it was true; but insanity in high places seemed to be moved to utter contempt at the bare mention of such a thing. When a man is poor, unless he has brought his poverty upon himself by extravagance, or idleness, or his own wrongdoing, the man is a man for all that, and none the worse man for being poor. Indeed, some of the best of men have been as poor as their Lord was. I have known many, who have been very poor, yes who have been the excellent of the earth, in whom a true saint of God might well take delight. There always will be various ranks and conditions among man, and there is a certain respect which is due from one to another which should never be withheld where it is tightly due; but, at the same time, whenever a man begins to say that, because God has given him more than he has given to another, therefore he will despise his poorer brother and look down upon him, it must be dishonoring and displeasing to God, and it is extremely likely that he will turn round, and make the proud man bite the dust. How often those, who have held their heads so very high, have been rolled in the mire, and how easily that might be made to come to pass with others!

A further inference arising out of this truth that God gives us all that we have, is that it *ought never to be difficult for us to give back to God as much as ever we can.* As he has given us all that we have, it is but right that we should use it to his glory; and if, under the rule of his grace, and

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under the gospel, he does not so much claim a return from us as a matter of right, but leaves our liberality to be aroused by the love which constrains us, rather than by the law which compels us; yet let us not give God less because he gives us more. Under the Mosaic dispensation, the Jew gave his tenth by compulsion, but let us willingly give to God more than that, and not need to be constrained to do it, except by the sweet constraint of love. Do I owe every penny that I have in this world to the bounty of God's hand? Then, when God's cause and God's poor are in need, let no one have to beg of me to give to them. I always feel ashamed when I hear people say that we are "begging for God's cause." God's cause has no need to be a beggar from those who would be beggars if it were not for God's grace. Oh, no, no; it must never be so! We ought to be like the

children of Israel in the wilderness, who gave so generously towards the building and furnishing of the tabernacle that Moses had to restrain their liberality, for they had already given “much more than enough for the service of the work, which the Lord commanded to make.” Let us try to imitate the liberality which God has manifested toward us in the gift of his well-beloved Son, and in all the covenant blessings which come to us through him. All those who have received so much from God should count it their privilege and delight to give back to him all that they can.

These reflections might suffice for this part of the subject, but I shall add one more. *“The Lord gave;” — then we must worship the Giver, and not his gifts.* How can we so degrade ourselves as to worship that which God has given to us? Yet you know that many make idols of their gold, their lands, their husbands, their wives, their children, or their friends. It is no unusual thing for a little child to be the god of the family; and wherever that, is the case, there is a rod laid up in store in that house. You cannot make idols of your children without finding out, sooner or later, that God makes them into rods with which he will punish you for your idolatry. “Little children, keep yourselves from idols,” was the injunction of the loving apostle John, and he wrote thus in love, because he knew that if God sees us making idols of anything, he will either break our idols or break us. If we really are his people, he will, in some way or other, wean us from our idols, for he wants our love to be given wholly to himself; so it is best for us to keep the creature in its right place, and never to let the joys or comforts of this life usurp God’s rightful position in our hearts. God has been pleased so to fashion the world that it should always be under our feet; and, as Christians, we should always keep it there. The dearest thing

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we have on earth should ever be estimated by us at its proper value as a gift from God but as nothing more than that; and never be allowed to occupy our heart’s throne, which should always be reserved for the Lord alone.

But now we are to think, for a while, of the Lord’s hand taking away from us as well as giving to us. Job said, “The Lord gave, *and the Lord hath taken away.*” Some of you have come to this service very sad and heavy of heart because that dear child of yours is dead. Well, I do not blame you for sorrowing over your loss, but I pray you also to remember that it is the Lord who hath taken your child away from you. You say that it was the fever that took away your dear one, and perhaps that was the immediate cause of your child’s death; but if you can realize that the fever was only the instrument in God’s hand to remove the dear little one from your care to his own, surely you will dry your tears. And as for that substance of yours, which has almost melted away under the fiery trial to which it has been subjected, so that poverty now to stare you in the face, you will be able to bear even that when you remember that it is the Lord’s hand that has taken away what his hand had first given.

So long as we look at the secondary causes of our trouble, we reason for sorrow; but *when our faith can pierce the veil, and see the Great First*

*Cause, then our comfort begins.* If you strike a dog with a stick, he will try to bite the stick, because he is a dog; but if he knew better, he would try to bite you, and not the stick. Yet that is the way that we often act with the troubles that come to us; we fly at the second causes, and so are angry and petulant with them; but if we would always recollect that it is God who taketh away, as well as God who gives; — that he is at the back of all our trials and troubles; — that his hand weighs out our shame of grief, and measures our portion of pain, then we should not dare to rebel and bewail; but, like David, we should say, “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it;” even if we could not get up higher still, and say, with Job, “The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Further, *when once we know that God has done anything, that fact forbids any question concerning it* It must be right because he did it I may not be able to tell why, but God knows why he did it He may not tell me the reason; but he has a reason, for the Lord never acted unreasonably. There never was any action of his, however sovereign or autocratic it might

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appear to be, but was done “after the counsel of his own will.” Infinite wisdom dictates what absolute sovereignty decrees. God is never arbitrary, or tyrannical. He does as he wills, but he always wills to do that which is not only most, for his own glory, but also most for our real good. How dare we question anything that God does?

My dear sister, rest assured that it is better that you should be a widow, and seek to glorify God in your widowhood. My dear young friend, believe that it is better that you should be an orphan; otherwise, God would not have taken away your parents. It is better that you, dear friends, should lose your eyes; it is better that you should be poor, or diseased, or else the Lord would not let you be so, for “no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” If health and wealth were good things for you, God would let you have them. If it were a good thing for saints never to die, they never would die. If it were a good thing for them to go to heaven at once, they would go there at once. If you are walking uprightly, you may know that you have all things, which, all things considered, would be good for you. Some things, which might be good in themselves, or good for others, might not be good for you; and, therefore, the Lord in love withholds them from you. But, whatever he gives, or takes away, or withholds, raise no questions concerning it, but let it be sufficient for you that the Lord hath done it.

Besides, *when we know that the Lord takes away our possessions, the knowledge that they are his effectually prevents us from complaining.* Suppose you are a steward to a certain nobleman, and that his lordship has been pleased to entrust you with ten thousand pounds of his money. By and by, he withdraws it from your charge, and invests it somewhere else. Well, it never was your money; you might have complained if it had been. But you are only a steward, and if your lord pleases to withdraw his own money, are you going to be out of temper with your master because he

does what he wills with his own? Suppose you have a banker, — and we are, as it were, the Lord's bankers, — and suppose that, a week or two ago, you paid into the bank a thousand pounds, or more, and the clerks or those in authority were pleased to take charge of your money. But suppose that you went to the bank to-day, and drew it all out; they did not get angry with you. You would not like to trust a banker who was only civil to you when you were paying in money; and if we are God's bankers, he sometimes puts his treasure into our keeping, and sometimes takes it out; but it is not our treasure any more than our money is the banker's when we

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entrust it to his care. It is on deposit with us, and we ought to be paying to God good interest upon it. Whatever God has given to us, he never gave it as our own freehold. 'It was always on a lease; — a lease, too, that had to be renewed every moment; for, if God chose to cancel it, he could do so whenever he pleased. How dare we then complain?

To use another figure, our *Position* is like that of a nurse, into whose care a mother placed her babe, and the nurse dandled the child, and was glad to have the charge of it; but when she had to return it to its mother, she cried over the loss of the little darling. Yet it was not the nurse's child, given to her to keep; it was only hers to nurse. So it was with your children whom God has taken home to himself; they were not yours to keep. The Lord put each one of them, for a while, into your charge, and said to you, 'Christain mother, take this child, and nurse it, for me, and I will pay thee thy wages;' so, when he called the child back to himself, why should you complain as though he had wronged you? Or, to use another illustration, which has been frequently employed in this connection, — a gardener had been specially careful in tending one particular rose, which was yet fair to look upon; but, when he went, one morning, to his favorite rose-bush, he found that the flower, of which he had taken such care, was gone. He was very vexed, for he thought that some bad boy had stolon into the garden, and taken away his best flower. He was complaining very bitterly of his loss, when someone said, 'The master has been down in the garden this morning, and he has been admiring this rose-bush, and he has taken away that fine bud of which you were so proud.' Then the gardener was delighted that he had been able to grow a flower that had attracted his master's notice; and, instead of mourning any longer, he began to rejoice. So, should it be with anything upon which we have set our hearts. Let each one of us say to our Master, 'My Lord, if it pleases thee to take it, it pleases me to lose it. Why should I complain because thou hast taken from me, what is really thine own?

*“If thou shouldst call me to resign  
What most I prize, — it ne'er was mine;  
I only yield thee what was thine:  
Thy will be done! ““*

**II.** The second part of my discourse must be briefer than the first part, yet it is equally important. It is this, LEARN TO BLESS THE LORD'S NAME IN EVERYTHING.

Learn to ring the bells of his praise all day long; and, for the matter of that, all night, long too. First, *bless the name of the Lord when he reveals his hand in giving.*

“Ah!” you say, “that is an easy thing to do.” So it ought to be, my brethren and sisters in Christ, and it is a neglect of our duty where we do not do it. We come down to our breakfast in the morning, rejoicing in health and strength, and we go out to our day’s engagements, but, I hope not without thankfulness that we are in health, and that we have food to eat, and raiment to put on. We are out all day, and things prosper with us, but I trust that we do not accept all this as a matter of course, but that we praise the Lord for it, all the day long; and then, when we go home again at night, and God is still with us, I hope we do not fall asleep before we again praise him. John Bunyan used to say that the very chickens shame us if we are ungrateful, for they do not take a drink of water without lifting up their heads, as if in thankfulness for the refreshing draught. If we, who are the Lord’s children, do not bless him for the mercies which so constantly come to us from him, we are of all people the most ungrateful. Oh, for a grateful frame of mind, for I am sure that is a happy frame of mind. Those who are determined to murmur, and to complain of God’s dealings with them, are sure to find plenty of things to complain of; while those who are of a thankful spirit will see reasons and occasions for gratitude in everything that happens. Do you remember a touching story, told some years ago, of a poor mother with her two little fatherless children? On a cold winter’s night, they discovered an empty house, into which they went for shelter. There was an old door standing by itself, and the mother took it, placed it across a corner of the room, and told the children to creep behind it so as to get a little protection from the cold wind. One of the children said, “Oh mother, what will those poor children do, that haven’t got, any door to set up to keep out the wind?” That child was grateful even for such a poor shelter as that; yet there are some, who have thousands of greater blessings than that, and yet do not see God’s hand in them, and do not praise him for them. If that has been the case with any of us, let us turn over a new leaf, and ask God to rule it with music lines, and then let us put on them notes of thanksgiving, and say to the Lord, with David, “Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and over;” or say, with one of our old poets, —

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*“My God, I’ll praise thee while I live,  
And praise thee when I die,  
And praise thee when I rise again,  
And to eternity.”*

Praising God is one of the best ways of keeping away murmuring. Praising God is like paying a peppercorn rent for our occupation of our earthly tenement \* (\*See *Metropolitan Tabernacle -Pulpit, No. 3,021, ‘Landlord and Tenant.’*) When the rent is not paid, the owners generally turn the tenants out, and God might well do so with us if he were like earthly

landlords. If we are not grateful to, him, for all the bounties which we constantly receive from, him, he may make the stream to stop, and then what should we do? Ungrateful mind, beware of this great danger! Thankfulness is one of the easiest virtues for anyone to practice, and certainly it is one of the cheapest; so let all Christians especially comply with the apostolic injunction, ‘Be ye thankful.’ It, is a soul -enriching taking to be thankful. I am sure, that a Christian man, with gratitude for a small income, is really richer than the man who lives a graceless life, and is plentifully endowed with worldly wealth. David spoke truly when he said, ‘‘A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.’’ So, let others do as they will, we say, ‘Give us, Lord, whatever thou wilt, whether it be little or much, so long as thou dost give with it the light of thy countenance, our souls shall be abundantly content ‘‘Thus are we to bless the name of the Lord for all that he gives us. But, *it is a much more difficult thing to bless the name of the Lord for what he takes away from us*; yet, difficult as it is, I venture to say that many believers, who have forgotten to praise God while he was giving to them, have not forgotten to praise him when he was taking away from them. I do not know how thankful Job had been before this trying period in his history, but I do know that his trials brought out this expression of his thankfulness; it is his first recorded praise to God. Some of us need to lie a little while upon a sick-bed in order to make us thankful for having had good health for so long; and we need to be brought low, and to have our spirits depressed, in order to make us grateful that we have had such cheerful spirits, and been blessed with so many comforts. It is not natural or easy for flesh and blood to praise God for what he takes away; yet this painful experience often wakes up the gratitude of the Christian, and he who forgot to praise the Lord before makes up for it now.

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Brethren, praise is God’s due when he takes as well as when he gives, for there is as much love in his taking as in his giving. The kindness of God is quite as great when, he smites us with his rod as when he kisses us with the kisses of his mouth. If we could see everything as he sees it, we should often perceive that the kindest possible thing he can do to us is that which appears to us to be unkind. A child came home from the common with her lap full of brightly shining berries. She seemed very pleased with what she had found, but her father looked frightened when he saw what she had got, and anxiously asked her, ‘Have you eaten any of those berries?’ ‘No, father,’ replied the child, to his great relief; and then he said to her, ‘Come with me into the garden;’ and there he dug a hole, put the berries in, stamped on them, and crushed them, and then covered them with earth. All this while, the little one thought, ‘How unkind father is to take away these things which pleased me so much!’ But she understood the reason for it, when he told her that the berries were so poisonous that, if she had eaten even one of them, she would in all probability have died in consequence. In like manner, sometimes, our comforts turn to poison, especially when we begin to make idols of them; and it is kind on the part of God to stamp on



them, and put them right away from us, so that no mischief may come to our souls. Surely that child said, "Thank you, father, for what you have done; it was love that made you do it;" and you also, believer, can say, "Thank God for my sickness, for my poverty, for that dead child of mine, for my widowhood, for my orphanhood, — thank God for it, all. It would have been ruinous to me to have left me unchastened. Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept his word. Blessed be his name for all that he has done, both in giving and in taking away."

It is a grand thing when we do not judge God's dealings with us simply by the rules of reason. From the first moment when the love of God is revealed to us, right on to the hour when we shall be, in the presence of the Father in glory, we may depend upon it that there is infinite love in every act of God in taking from us, just as much as in giving to us. Jesus said to his disciples, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." The Father always loved Jesus with infinite love, — he loved him as much when he was on the cross as he did when he was on his throne. And, in like manner, Jesus always loves us with an unchanging love, — a love which can never fail us. He loves us as much in the furnace of affliction as he will love us when we shall be with him in glory; so let us bless his name,

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whether he gives or takes away. I invite every mourning soul here to bless God's name at this moment

"Ah!" says one, "I wish I could get a little more happiness to sustain me under my many trials." Well, let me just remind you of the poor widow woman who went out to gather a few sticks to make a fire, that she might bake some cakes for herself and her son. When the prophet Elijah met her, what did he say to her? He told her to make him a little cake first, and afterwards, he added, "make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth. And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah." Notice that he said to the woman, "Make me a little cake first;" and God seems to say to you, "Pr aise me first, and then I will bless you." Say, as Job did a little later in his history, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." I believe it marks the turn of the tide, with a saint, when he can say to the Lord, with good old John Ryland, — "Thee, at all times, will I bless; Having thee, I all possess." The sky soon begins to clear when the Christian begins to say, "The Lord's will be done;" "not as I will, but as thou wilt" "This is a sign that the chastisement tins had its due effect; the rod will probably be put away new. Ye mourning souls, take down your harps from the willows and sound forth at least a note or two to the praise of the Lord your God. Praise him with such notes as these: "Truly Go is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart . . . I will not fret myself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. . . O my God, I believe that all things are

working together for my good, and that thou art my gracious Heavenly Father, full of compassion, and overflowing with love.” If you talk like this, Christian, and mean what you say, it will be a blessing to yourself, a comfort to others, and an honor to your God. As I speak thus, I am reminded that these comforting truths belong only to tame believers; and as I send you away, I dare not put the words of my text into all your mouths, for, alas! some of you cannot see our Father’s hand in anything that happens to you. You are without a parent, except that wicked one of whom Christ said to the Jews, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.” Yet, remember, you who cannot claim God as your Father, that the door of his grace is not yet shut. He is still willing  
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to receive you; if you will come to him, confessing your sins, and seeking mercy through the precious blood of Jesus, he is both able and willing to give you a new heart, and a right spirit, to save you here and now, and to adopt you at once into his family. Then will you also be able to see his hand both in giving and in taking away, and you also will learn to bless his name at all times. If God the Lord shall deal thus graciously with you, his shall be the praise for ever and ever. Amen.

# PATIENT JOB, AND THE BAFFLED ENEMY.

NO. 2172

A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING,  
AUGUST 28TH, 1890,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.” — Job 1:22.*

THAT is to say, in all this trial, and under all this temptation, Job kept right with God. During all the losses of his estate, and the deaths of his children, he did not speak in an unworthy manner. The text speaks admiringly of ‘all this’; and a great ‘all’ it was. Some of you are in troubles many; but what are they compared with those of Job? Your afflictions are mole-hills contrasted with the Alps of the patriarch’s grief. ‘All this’! He was suddenly reduced from a peer to a pauper; from a man of great wealth to a person in absolute poverty; from a happy father to a childless mourner. Who can measure or fathom ‘all this’? Yet, ‘In all this Job sinned not.’ Here was the triumph of a gracious spirit. Ah, dear friends! if God could uphold Job in all this, you may be sure that he can support *you*. Look to him for this divine support.

‘All this’ also alludes to all that Job did, and thought, and said. He was full to bursting with swelling grief, he shaved his head, and rent his garments, and he lifted up his voice unto the Lord his God; but ‘In all this Job sinned not.’ He rose up, for he was a man of action, a man of a sensitive and powerful mind, a man of poetic energy, who could not fail to express his emotions in striking symbols; but ‘In all this Job sinned not.’ This is a great deal to say of a man when you see him in the extreme of trial. If in patience he can possess his soul when all the arrows of affliction are wounding him, he is a man indeed.

May we ourselves so live that it may be said of us in the end, "In all this he sinned not. He swam through a sea of trouble. The roll of his life-story is written within and without with lamentations; but in all this he did not dishonor the name of his Lord. He did and said many things; but in them all he was patient, resigned, obedient, and never uttered a rebellious word." Let us think of the wonderful case of Job in a practical way; desiring the Holy Spirit to make us like him.

**I.** Our first head shall be, **IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS THE MAIN THING IS, NOT TO SIN.** It is not said, "In all this Job was never spoken against," for he was spoken against by Satan in the presence of himself; and very soon he was falsely accused by men who should have comforted him. You must not expect, dear friend, that you will pass through this world, and have it said of you in the end, "In all this no one ever spoke against him." I heard say of one man, "He was a man who never had an enemy." I ventured to add, "nor a friend." He has no friend who never had a foe. Those who secure zealous lovers are pretty sure to call forth intense adversaries. A man who is such a chip in the porridge that he never offends, is pretty sure to be equally flavourless in the other direction. The trimmer may dodge through the world without much censure; but it will seldom be so with an out-and-out man of God. Because he is not of the world, the world will hate him. The blessed and holy Lord Jesus was slandered to the utmost. God, the ever-blessed, was himself libelled in Paradise itself by an old servant, who had turned into an old serpent; and, therefore, you must not wonder if you are abused also. To go through life without calumny is not a thing to be expected; but it is anxiously to be desired that we may go through every phase of joy or of sorrow without falling into sin.

Neither is it a chief point for us to seek to go through life without suffering, since the Lord's servants, the best of them, are ripened and mellowed by suffering. Amos, the herdsman, was a bruiser of sycamore figs — a kind of fig that never ripened in Palestine unless it was struck with a rod, and thus was bruised. I fear me, there are very few of the godly who will fully ripen without affliction. The vine bears but little fruit unless it makes the acquaintance of the knife, and is sternly pruned. I fear that much fruit will seldom be forthcoming without much tribulation. A high character might be produced, I suppose, by continued prosperity; but it has very seldom been the case. Adversity, however it may appear to be our foe, is our true friend; and, after a little acquaintance with it, we receive it as a

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precious thing, the prophecy of a coming joy. It should be no ambition of ours to traverse a smooth path without thorn or stone. Rather let us ask —

*"Shall Simon bear the cross alone,*

*And all the rest go free?*

*No, there's a cross for every one,*

*And there's a cross for me."*

Dear friends, I think also that it should not be our ambition to go through the world without sadness of heart. It is true that heaviness of heart is

worse than bodily suffering: “A wounded spirit who can bear?” Some persons, however, seem to endure terrible trouble without much feeling. They are case-hardened, stout-hearted, thick-skinned persons; and truly I have half envied them at times, and almost prayed to lose that sensitiveness which causes fear; but it would be a very doubtful blessing. We need to be tender, that we may feel the slightest touch of God’s hand. “Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.” The apostle says, “Though now for a season, if need be, *ye are in heaviness* through manifold temptations.” Many read it as if there were a needs-be for the trial; and so, indeed, there is; but the needs-be in the passage has reference to being in heaviness. If you can bear trial without ever being heavy, it is scarcely a trial to you. “The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil.” It is the ache of the ache, it is the sting of the wasp which works effectively on the heart. If we do not smart under the rod, what is the use of it to us? Therefore I would not have you ask that you may be kept from sadness of soul; but I would have you pray seven times a day from the very bowels of your being, “Lord, keep me from sin.” May it be said at the last, of every one of us, that in all this we sinned not!

Remember, if the grace of God prevents our affliction from driving us into sin, then *Satan is defeated*. Satan did not care what Job suffered, so long as he could but hope to make him sin; and he was foiled when he did not sin. He must have regretted that he tried him, when he found that he could not make him sin. I think I hear the friend muttering, “Give him back his camels; give him back his sheep; if by the loss of these his patience and resignation are made manifest.” If he could not extract a rebellious speech from Job, the tempter had lost all his cruel efforts: his malice had spent itself without result. If he could not make the good man sin, nor charge God foolishly, he was defeated, and God was glorified. If in enduring your particular trouble, my dear friend, you do not fall into sin, you are more

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than a conqueror over him that hateth you. The arch-enemy will fly away confounded from you, if you are able to resist him while darkness covers your soul. If you conquer him in your hour of grief, you conquer indeed. May your conflict with Apollyon be like that of Christian in ‘Pilgrim’s Progress,’ and to you also may a monument be erected, bearing this inscription —

*“The man so bravely played the man,  
He made the fiend to fly;  
Whereof a monument I stand  
The same to testify.”*

If you do not sin while under the stress of heavy trouble, *God will be honored*. He is not so much glorified by preserving you from trouble, as by upholding you in trouble. He allows you to be tried that his grace in you may be tested and glorified. When one Winstanley, years ago, built a lighthouse on the Eddystone Rock, he said that he was sure that it would stand any storm that ever blew, and he should himself like to be in it in the

fiercest tempest that ever drove adown the Channel. It came to pass that he was in his own erection one night, and there came a tremendous blast, which swept him and his lighthouse clean away, so that he was never heard of more. He courted trial because he believed in his work: God permits trial because he knows that his wisdom and grace have made us able to bear it. The lighthouse which was afterwards built on the Eddystone has had all manner of storms beating upon it, but it has outlived them all; and therefore its builder's name is held in honor. Even thus our God is glorified in every trial of his saints, when their grace enables them to endure with patience. "There," says he, "see what grace can do, what suffering it can endure, what labors it can perform!" Grace is like an athlete performing before the great King and his heavenly court. A cloud of witnesses look down upon the feats of faith, and note with joy how it achieves everything which the Lord appoints it to perform. It even enters into contest with the fiend of hell, and gives him a signal overthrow; and he that made the athlete, and trained him for the contest, is honored thereby. If you do not sin in your trouble, your endurance of trial will bring glory to God. Remember, furthermore, that if you do not sin, *you yourself will be no loser by all your tribulations*. Sin alone can injure you; but if you remain steadfast, though you are stripped, you will be clothed with glory; though you are deprived of comfort, you will lose no real blessing. True, it may not seem a pleasant thing to be stripped, and yet if one is soon going to

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bed, it is of no great consequence. It is no easy thing to part with wealth; but if thereby you are unburdened, the loss is a gain. A child of God may have the knife sharply cutting him, but if it only removes the superfluous wood, it may be of the utmost benefit to the fruitage of the tree; and that is the main thing. If the metal in the pot loses none of its gold, all that it does lose is well lost, and is, indeed, really gained. Though you be reduced in circumstances, what matters it, if you are enlarged in spirit? Though you be sick in body, what matters it, if the soul's health be furthered thereby? To sin would be terrible; to abide in holiness is triumph. In all our affliction may there be no defection. The Lord may send us a ton of trouble, but this will be better than an ounce of sin. Do not let all your prayer run after deliverance from sorrow, but first of all pray, "Let not any iniquity have dominion over me." Seek first the kingdom of God, and obedience to him, and then deliverance shall be added unto you. We are permitted to say, "Lord, keep us from trouble"; but we are commanded to pray, "Deliver us from evil." Should trials come to us, even like those which happened to Job, it shall be well with our souls if our hearts are not drawn or driven into sin.

**II.** And, now, a second thought arises out of the text. IN ALL TIME OF TRIAL THERE IS SPECIAL FEAR OF OUR SINNING. It is well for the child of God to remember that the hour of darkness is an hour of danger. Suffering is fruitful soil for certain forms of sin. Hence it was needful for the Holy Spirit to give a testimony to Job that, "In all this he sinned not." It looked

as if he must sin; but yet he did not sin; and this is recorded by inspiration as a memorable fact. He still held fast his integrity, and bowed before the will of the Lord. Dear friends, if you are approaching a season of trouble, watch and pray that, in entering upon trial, you may not also enter upon sinning. Many have sorely grieved their God by what they have said and done in the hour of sorrow.

For instance, we are apt to *grow impatient*. We murmur against the Lord. We think our trial is too long, or that prayer is not answered when it ought to be. If God be faithful, why does he not hasten to deliver his child? In the olden time he rode upon a cherub and did fly, yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind; but why are his chariots now so long in coming? The feet of his mercy seem shod with lead. Petulance and complaining are sins which easily beset those who are severely tried. Men are apt to have bitter thoughts of God when he puts his hand into the bitter box, and brings out the quinine of sorrow. Of the two sexes, women usually carry the prize for

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patience, especially in bodily sickness. As for us, who are made of rougher stuff, it is to our shame that we are, as a rule, very impatient of pain. We do not so much lose our patience as show that we have none. Job under his first set of trials was not swift to complain; for ye have heard of the patience of Job, which the Holy Spirit takes care to mention in the New Testament.

We are even tempted to *rebellion* against God. I have met with cases in which rebellious words have been uttered, and even spoken again and again. One said in my hearing, "God has taken away my mother, and I shall never forgive him. I can never think of him as a God of love as once I did." Such words will cause a child of God more pain than the loss itself would have occasioned. I heard one say of his dying child, whom I was called in to visit, that he could not believe that God would be so unjust as to take his daughter from him. Indeed, he spoke so rebelliously that I, with all gentleness, but with deep solemnity of soul, admonished him that I feared the Lord would visit him for such proud speeches. It was clear that his child would soon die, and I feared that he would die himself, when the shock came, because he so stoutly quarrelled with the Lord. I said to myself, "A child of God cannot speak in this way about his Father without coming under further chastisement." It came to pass as I expected, and he himself was laid low. Grieved as I was, I was by no means surprised. How can we rebel against God, and hope to prosper in that rebellion? With the froward he will show himself froward; and we shall find out what a world of misery that will bring us. Oh, for grace not only to yield because we must, but because we trust! May we say, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good"! Before that temptation Job did not fall; for in this respect he sinned not.

We may also sin by *despair*. An afflicted one said, "I shall never look up again. I shall go mourning all my days." Dear friend, why not be cheerful again? Are God's mercies clean gone for ever? Thou art bidden to believe always. "Who is among you that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let

him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." In the dark is the place for trust, not for despair. A child that is sullen will probably make for himself ten times more misery than the rod of itself would cause him. Who dares despair while God bids him trust? Come, if you are as poor as Job, be as patient as Job, and you will find hope ever shining like a star which never sets.

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Many sin by *unbelieving speeches*. I have repeated one or two naughty things that God's children have said; but Job said nothing of the kind; he bravely said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Men have been driven into *a kind of atheism* by successive troubles. They have wickedly argued — "There cannot be a God, or he would not let me suffer so." Beloved, you must not speak as the foolish do; and such speech is sheer folly. Your mouth would be greatly defiled if you were thus to vex the Holy Spirit. Has the Lord saved you, and will you speak against him? I have no time to say more where so much might be added. The Lord preserve us in trying times from sinning either with heart, or hand, or lip.

**III.** Notice, thirdly, that IN ACTS OF MOURNING WE NEED NOT SIN.

Hearken: you are allowed to weep. You are allowed to show that you suffer by your losses. See what Job did. "Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped"; and "in all this Job sinned not." The mother wept much over her child, and yet she may not have sinned: a mother's grief and a mother's love are sacred things. When a dear child is mourned over, those may have been not only perfectly natural tears, but even holy tears. The husband lamented sorely when his beloved was taken from him. He was right. I should have thought far less of him if he had not done so. "Jesus wept."

But there is a measure in the expression of grief. Job was not wrong in rending his garment: he might have been wrong if he had torn it into shreds. He was not wrong in shaving his head: he would have erred had he torn out his hair, as some have done whom despair has turned into maniacs. He deliberately took the razor and shaved his head; and in this he sinned not. You may wear mourning: saints did so in other times. You may weep; for it may perhaps be a relaxing of your strained emotions. Do not restrain the boiling floods. A flood of tears without may assuage the deluge of grief within. Job's acts of mourning were moderate and seemly — toned down by his faith. I wish that Christians did not so often follow the way of the world at their funerals, but would try to make it clear that they sorrow not even as others that are without hope. You may wear black so long that it becomes the ensign of rebellion against the will of the Lord.

Job's words also, though very strong, were very true: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither." If we say no more than the truth, we may say it if the tone is not that of murmuring; although

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perhaps sometimes it might be better to be altogether silent, like Aaron, who held his peace. David said, "I opened not my mouth; because thou



didst it.” If we cannot maintain a golden silence, yet let our speech be silver: we must use nothing less than precious metal.

Job mourned, and yet did not sin; for he mourned, and worshipped as he mourned. This is what I commend to you who are mourning at this time. If you must fall on the ground, worship there before the Lord. If your heart is bowed down, emulate the holy ones who fall on their faces and worship God. I believe that some of the truest, purest, sweetest, and strongest devotion has come to God from hearts that were breaking with grief. Remember, then, that in acts of mourning there is not, of necessity, any sin.

**IV.** But, fourthly, IN CHARGING GOD FOOLISHLY WE SIN GREATLY. “Job sinned not,” and the phrase which explains it is, “nor charged God foolishly.” Here let me say that *to call God to our judgment-seat at all is a high crime and misdemeanor*. “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?” Woe unto him that contendeth with his Maker. The Lord is absolutely sovereign, and he giveth no account of his matters. We are usurping fools when we pretend to sit in judgment upon the Judge of all the earth.

In the next place, *we sin in requiring that we should understand God*. What? Is God under bonds to explain himself to us? Do we threaten to revolt unless he will put himself right with us? Blessed be his name, he is inscrutable, and I am glad to have him so. Do you want your God to explain his dispensations? Are you not content to believe him? The demand for explanation is unbelief. This is, indeed, making yourselves to be wiser than God. Let us bow before him without a question. He is Jehovah, and that ends the matter. He would have his children feel that what he wills is always best. Bow before God, and prostrate your desire, and thought, and judgment before his throne. What he does is wise, and true, and kind; and of this we are sure. We can very easily charge God foolishly, but we had better not charge him at all; for who are we that we should call the Eternal to account?

We charge God foolishly *when we imagine that he is unjust*. “Ah!” said one, “when I was a worldling I prospered; but ever since I have been a Christian I have endured no end of losses and troubles.” Do you mean to insinuate that the Lord does not treat you justly? Think a minute, and stand corrected. If the Lord were to deal with you according to strict justice,

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where would you be? If he were now to call you to account for your sins, and lay bare the naked sword of justice, what would become of you? You would be at once in despair, and very soon in hell. Never charge upon the Lord a failure of justice, for this is to sin with a vengeance.

Some, however, *will bring foolish charges against his love*. “How can he be a God of love if he permits me to suffer so?” You forget that word — “As many as I tenderly love” (for that is the Greek word) “I rebuke and chasten.” The more the Lord loves you, the more surely he will rebuke any and every evil that he sees in you. You are so precious to him, that he desires to make you perfect in every good work to do his will. God prizes

you much, my sister, or you would not have to be so often ground upon the wheel to take away all excrescences and make the jewel of your soul to shine. "Oh," said a worldling to me when I was in great pain and weakness of body, "is this the way God treats his children? Then I am glad I am not one." How my heart burned within me, and my eyes flashed, as I said that I would take an eternity of such pain as I endured sooner than stand in the place of the man who preferred ease to God. I felt it would be hell to me to have a doubt of my adoption, and whatever pain I might suffer was a trifle so long as I knew that the Lord was my God. Every child of God under such a taunt would feel exceeding jealous for the honor of his Lord. Beloved, we are willing to take the divine love with every possible drawback that can be concerned; for the love of our Father is a weight of glory, and all the sorrows of time are but "light afflictions," and they last but for a moment. How sweet to hear the Lord say —

*"In love I correct thee thy gold to refine;  
To make thee, at length, in my likeness to shine!"*

Alas! at times, unbelief charges God foolishly with reference to his power. We think that he cannot help us in some peculiar trial. Throw to the winds such fears; they are unworthy of us, and dishonoring to our Lord. Is anything too hard for the Lord? Through flood and fire he will bring us in safety.

We may be so foolish as to doubt *his wisdom*. If he be All-wise, how can he suffer us to be in such straits, and to sink so low as we do? What folly is this? Who art thou, that thou wouldst measure the wisdom of God. Shall an owl begin to compute the light of the sun? or an emmet estimate the eternal hills? Shall some tiny animalcules, sporting with myriads of others in a drop of water, begin to trace the bounds of the sea? What art thou?

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Who art thou, that thou shouldst set thy judgment against that of the Lord God Almighty? Less than nothing; wilt thou censure the Infinite? A worm of the dust; wilt thou arraign the mighty God? This be far from thee. Job did not so, for he sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

**V.** Lastly — as I must close in haste — TO COME THROUGH GREAT TRIAL WITHOUT SIN IS THE HONOR OF THE SAINTS. If we are tried, and come forth from it naked as when we were born, we need not be ashamed; but if we come out of it without sinning, then the greatness of the affliction increases the honor of our victory. "In all this Job sinned not": the "all this" is a part of the glory with which grace covered him. Suppose that your life was all ease: suppose that you were brought up tenderly from a child, well educated, left with a sufficient fortune to gratify every wish, happily married, free from sickness, lifted above care, grinding labor, and heavy sorrow: what then? Assuredly you could never be noted for patience. Who would ever have heard of Job if he had not been tried? None would have said of him, "In all this Job sinned not." Only by his patience could he be perfected and immortalized. Suppose that your record should be: from birth a sufferer, throughout life a struggler; at home a wrestler, and abroad a soldier and a cross-bearer; and, notwithstanding all this, full of joy and

peace, through strong believing: tried to the uttermost, yet found faithful. In such a chronicle there is something worth remembering. There is no glory in being a feather-bed soldier, a man bedecked with gorgeous regimentals, but never beautified by a scar, or ennobled by a wound. All that you ever hear of such a soldier is that his spurs jingle on the pavement as he walks. There is no history for this carpet-knight. He is just a dandy. He never smelt gunpowder in his life; or if he did, he fetched out his scentbottle to kill the offensive odour. Well, that will not make much show in the story of the nations. If we could have our choice, and we were as wise as the Lord himself, we should choose the troubles which he has appointed us, and we should not spare ourselves a single pang. Who wants to paddle about a duck-pond all his life? Nay, Lord, if thou wilt bid me go upon the waters, let me launch out into the deep. Those who are uplifted to the heavens by the billows, and then go down again to the deeps as ocean yawns, these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. Discomforts and dangers make men of us, and then we deal no more with childish things, but with eternal matters. If we had no troubles, we should in the end be dumb for lack of themes to speak upon; but now we are storing up incidents worth the telling to our brethren when we join the

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family circle before the throne. Tried souls can tell of the infinite mercy and love of God, who helped them, and delivered them. Give me an interesting life, after all; and if it is to be an interesting life, then it must be one that has its full share of trouble, as Job's had. Then shall it be a heaven to hear the verdict of the great Judge: "In all this my servant sinned not."

The honor of a Christian, or, let me say, the honor of God's grace in a Christian, is when we have so acted that we have obeyed in detail, not forgetting any point of duty. "In all this Job sinned not," neither in what he thought, or said, or did; nor even in what he did not say, and did not do: "In all this Job sinned not." We are apt to purpose that we will shut ourselves up in our own room, and never go out into the world again, or attempt to speak or act any more. Surely, that would be a great blank, and a blot upon our lives. No! No! No! We must not say, "I will speak no more in the name of the Lord." Go on speaking, go on acting, go on suffering. Breast the wave, Christian! Swim to the other shore; and may God's infinite mercy be seen in bringing you there! Crowd your life with action, and adorn it with patience, so that it shall be said, "In all this he sinned not." God grant us a detailed obedience, a following of the Lord fully, a perfect working out of the minute points of service!

I feel that I must add just this. As I read the verse through, it looked too dry for me, and so I wetted it with a tear. "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly"; and yet I, who have suffered so little, have often sinned, and, I fear, in times of anguish, have charged God foolishly. Dear friends, is not this true of some of you? If so, let your tear follow mine. But yet the tear will not wash out the sin. Fly to the fountain filled with blood, and wash therein from sins of impatience, sins of petulance, sins of rebellion, sins of unbelief. These are real sins, and they must be washed

away in the blood of the Lamb. Oh, how dear that fountain is to us! how dear to you who have often to lie in bed and suffer — for you still sin! How dear to us who have health and strength wherewith to serve God, for we see sin in our holy things, and we need to be purged from its defilement. You that go into business every day, and mix up with all sorts of persons, how much you have need of daily washing! Come, beloved, let us go together, and say, ‘Lord, forgive us.’”

I should like to say somewhat to some of you who are not God’s people. Suppose I were to sum up your lives, and wrote it out in this fashion: “W as fond of gaiety; spent many days in frivolous amusement; was sometimes

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drunken; occasionally would use profane language,” and so on. How falsely should I speak if I were to say, “In all this he sinned not”! Why, in all this you have done nothing else but sin. God has loaded your tables, and clothed your backs, and kept you in health, and prolonged your lives, and in all this you have done nothing else but sin and act towards God foolishly. I want you to come, then, to that same fountain of which I spake, and cry to-night, “Wash me, Savior, or I die.” You have been the very opposite of Job. You have sinned in all your comforts and your mercies, and have never shown due gratitude to the blessed God, but have done evil against him. The Lord bring us all to his feet, and then may he help us in all future troubles to stand firm, and not to sin. I know that some of you are entering upon fierce trials. You have the prospect of it on your minds tonight, and sitting here you feel depressed about it. Do not begin to despond, but be doubly diligent in prayer. Be more concerned to be kept from sinning than from suffering, and daily pray, “Lord, if thou wilt lead me by this rough road, yet keep my feet that I stumble not, and preserve me even to the end with garments unspotted from the world! I will ask no more of thee but this one thing. Holy Father, keep me as a dear child, obeying and serving thee, with all my heart, and soul, and strength, till I go up higher to dwell with thee for ever!” May th e Lord hear you all in the day of trouble, and preserve you to life’s latest hour, without spot and blameless! Then shall he be glorified in you, and you shall have joy. Amen, and Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Job 1.***

***HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK” — 758, 744.***

# A MERRY CHRISTMAS.

NO. 352

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING,  
DECEMBER 23RD, 1860,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

“And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.” — Job 1:4, 5.

JOB was an exceedingly happy man before his great trial. He was as much blessed in the fruit of his body as in his basket and in his store. Our text gives us a very pleasing picture of Job's family. He was a happy man to

have had so many children all comfortably settled in life; for you will perceive that they all had houses; they had left his roof; they had all established themselves, and had so prospered in the world that there was not one of them who had not enough of the world's goods to entertain all the rest. So that it seemed as if Job's prosperity in his business had attended his children in the different places where they had settled To add to his comfort, they were an undivided family: not like Abraham's household, where there was an Ishmael who mocked Isaac; nor like Isaac's household, where there was an Esau, and a Jacob who sought to supplant him; nor like Jacob's household, where there was a Joseph, and all the rest of his brethren were envious and jealous of him; nor like David's household, where there was perpetual strife and bickering between the one and the other. Job's descendants were a large tribe; but they were all united and knit together in bonds of perfect happiness; and moreover they seem to have had a great desire to preserve their unity as a family. Perhaps Job and

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his family were the only ones who feared God in the neighborhood; they wished therefore to keep themselves together as a little flock of sheep in the midst of wolves, as a cluster of stars in the midst of the thick darkness; and what a brilliant constellation they were, all of them shining forth and proclaiming the truth of God! I say it was their desire not only to enjoy pleasantness and peace, but to maintain it; for I think that these annual meetings at the different houses were intended to knit them together, so that if any little strife had arisen, as soon as they met at the next brothers house all might be settled, and the whole host might go on again shoulder to shoulder, and foot to foot, as one phalanx of soldiers for God. I think Job must have been a right happy man. I do not know that he always went to their feasts; perhaps the soberness of age might have a little disqualified him for joining in their youthful enjoyments, but I am sure he commended their feasting; I am quite certain he did not condemn it. If he had condemned it he would never have offered sacrifice to God, *lest* they should have sinned, but he would have told them at once it was a sinful thing, and that he could give no countenance to it. I think I see the happy group, so happy and holy that surely if David had been there, he would have said. 'Behold how good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.' But Job was a godly man, and so godly, that unlike Eli, he brought up his household in the fear of God, and was not only quick to observe any known sin, but was exceedingly jealous over his children, lest secretly and inadvertently in their hearts, while they were at their loaded tables, they might have said or thought anything which might be termed blaspheming God. He therefore as soon as the feasting was over, called them all together, and then as a preacher, told them of the danger to which they were exposed, and as a priest, (for every patriarch before the law was a priest) he offered burnt sacrifices, lest any sin should by any possibility remain upon his sons and daughters. So saith the text. I pray that now we may have grace to listen to it; and may what we shall now hear abide with us during the coming week, when some of you shall meet

together in your own houses! May God grant that our parents, or we, if we be parents, may be as Jobs, and when the feasting shall be over, may there come the sacrifice and the prayer, lest we should have sinned and blasphemed God in our hearts!

I shall divide my sermon thus. First, *the text*, and that is *festive: so we will ring in a merry bell*. Secondly, that which is in the text, and that is

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*instructive: so we will ring the sermon bell*. And, thirdly, *that which follows the text*, and that is *afflictive: so we will ring the funeral bell*.

**I.** First, then, the text itself, and that is festive let us therefore, RING THE MERRY BELL. I think I hear distinctly three notes in its merry peal. First, the text gives a license; secondly, it suggests a caution; and thirdly, it provides a remedy.

And, first, the text gives a *licence*. Now, ye souls who would deny to your fellowmen all sorts of mirth, come and listen to the merry bell of this text, while it gives a license to the righteous especially — a license that they meet together in their houses, and eat and drink, and praise their God. In Cromwell's days, the Puritans thought it an ungodly thing for men to keep Christmas. They, therefore, tried to put it down, and the common crier went through the street, announcing that Christmas was henceforth no more to be kept, it being a Popish, if not a heathenish ceremony. Now, you do not suppose that after the crier had made the proclamation, any living Englishman took any notice of it; at least, I can scarcely imagine that any did, except to laugh at it; for it is idle thus to strain at gnats and stagger under a feather. Albeit, that we do not keep the feast as Papists, nor even as a commemorative festival, yet there is a something in old associations that makes us like the day in which a man may shake off the cares of business, and disport himself with his little ones. God forbid I should be such a Puritan as to proclaim the annihilation of any day of rest which falls to the lot of the laboring man. I wish there were a half-a-dozen holidays in the year. I wish there were more opportunities for the poor to rest; though I would not have as many saint's days as there are in Romish countries; yet, if we had but one or two more days in which the poor man's household, and the rich man's family might meet together, it might perhaps, be better for us. However, I am quite certain that all the preaching in the world will not put Christmas down. You *will* meet next Tuesday, and you *will* feast, and you *will* rejoice, and each of you, as God has given you substance, will endeavor to make your household glad. Now, instead of telling you that this is all wrong, I think the merry bell of my text gives you a license so to do. Let us think a minute. Feasting is *not* a wrong thing, or otherwise Job would have forbidden it to his children, he would have talked to them seriously, and admonished them that this was an ungodly and wicked custom, to meet together in their houses. But, instead of this, Job only *feared* lest a wrong thing should be made out of a right thing, and offered sacrifices to remove their iniquity; but he did by no means condemn

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it. Would any of you ask a blessing upon your children's attendance at the

theater? Could you say, when they had been in such a place, "It may be they have sinned?" No, you would only talk thus of a right thing. I think I can prove to you that this was a good thing, for first you will notice, they met in *good houses*; they did not go to an ale-house to feast; they had no need to enter the tavern; but they met in their own houses; houses where prayer and praise were wont to be made. How much better for the working man to spend his money on his family than upon liquor sellers! And then it was *in good company*. They did not scrape together all the ruffians of the place to feast with them; but they kept to their own kith and kin; and feasting is good when good men feast; especially when they spare for the poor, as no doubt Job's children did, or else they were quite unworthy of their generous ancestor. They feasted in good houses, and in good company. And they observed during their feasting, good behavior. Job never heard of a wrong expression they had used; no one ever told him that they had become riotous, or that they had uttered one wrong word, or else Job could not have said, "It *may* be," but he would have said, "It *is* so." He must be a good son of whom a father could say, "It may be he has erred." All that he had was a fear lest secretly they might have done wrong; but it appears that openly their feasting had been such that even the busy tongue of scandal could not find fault with them. And besides, their feasting was a good thing, because it had a good intent; it was for amity, for cheerfulness and family union. It was that they might be bound together as a bundle of rods — strong and unbroken — that they might be as a strongly intertwined cord, interwoven by these their family greetings and meetings. Now, I say, that if in their case the thing was not wrong — and I think I have proved in four respects that it was right, — it was in good houses, in good company, with good behavior, and for a good purpose, — the text gives a license for us to do the like, and to meet in our houses, in the company of our kith and kin, provided we feast after a good sort, and do it with the good intent of knitting our hearts the one towards the other. But again: *good men of old have feasted*. Need I remind you of Abraham's making a great feast in his house, when his child Isaac was weaned? Shall I tell you of Sampson and his feasts, or of David, or of Hezekiah, or of Josiah, and of the kings who gave to every man a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine, and they cheered their hearts, and made merry before God?

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But let me remind you, that feasting, so far from being evil, was even an essential part of divine worship under the old law. Do you not read of the feast of trumpets, the feast of tabernacles, the feast of the Passover, the feast of the new moons, and how many other feasts besides? Come they not over again and again? Now, if the thing were wrong in itself, God would certainly never employ it as an emblem and token of the divine, the pure, and the heavenly doctrines of his grace. It is impossible that God should have taken a wrong thing to be the type of a right thing. He might take a common good, and make it the type of a special favor, but not an evil thing. It be far from us to suppose such a thing of our God.



Besides, did not the Savior himself countenance a feast, and help to provide the guests with the wherewithal that they might have good cheer? Do you think the Savior out of place, when he went to the wedding feast? and suppose ye that he, went there and did not eat and drink? Was it not said of him, "Behold a drunken man and a wine bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners?" Not that he was either drunken or a wine bibber, but that he "came eating and drinking," to dash to pieces the Pharisaism which says that that which goeth into a man defileth a man, whereas Christ teacheth "not that which goeth into a man, but that which cometh out of a man, that defileth a man." Jesus Christ, I say, was at the feast; and suppose ye that he bore a sad countenance? Did he sour with the vinegar of a morose behavior the wine with which he had filled the watering pots? I trow not, but I believe that at that marriage feast he joined with the guests; and if he were indeed "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," as he certainly was, yet did he not keep his griefs to himself, for if he came to suffer himself, he came to make others glad, and I doubt not that at the feast he seemed the gladdest of the guests, most glad because he was really the master of the feast, and because he saw in the wedding the type of his own marriage, his own divine espousals with the Church, which is "the bride, the Lamb's wife."

And, let me add once more, God has certainly made in this world provision for man's feasting. He had not given just dry bread enough for a man to eat, and keep body and soul together, for the harvests teem with plenty, and often are the barns filled to bursting. O Lord, thou didst not give simply dry bread and water for mankind, but thou hast filled the earth with plenty, and milk and honey hast thou given to us; and thou hast besides this laden the trees with fruit, and given to men dainties. Thou art not illiberal, thou dost not dole out with miserable hand the lean and scanty charity

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which some men would give to the poor, but thou givest liberally, and thou upbraidest not! And for what purpose is this given? to rot, to mould, to be trodden on, to be spoiled? no, but that men may have more than enough, that they may have all they want, and may rejoice before their God, and may feed the hungry, for this indeed is one essential and necessary part of all true Christian feasting. My text, I say, rings a merry bell, and gives *us* license for sacred feasting.

**2.** But now the same merry bell suggests a *caution*. Job said — "It *may* be "They were good sons; good, godly young men, I am sure, or else Job would not have said, "It *may* be." But "it *may* be," said he; "It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts;" or, as some translate it, "have blessed God too little in their hearts." They may not have been grateful enough for their prosperity, and for the enjoyments which God had given them. "It *may* be." Well, hearken, brethren, "it *may* be," too, that you and I may sin, and blaspheme God in our hearts, and be as Job's sons may have been, too little thankful. If, though they were true men and true women, though they all had a Job for their father, and though their feasting was in their own houses, and after a right sort, and a commendable sort,

yet there was a “*may be*” that there might be sin; am I too superstitious or too careful, when I say, brethren, “it *may be*,” *it may be* that in our happiest gathering of our family together, it *may be* that we shall sin! I think we could not prefer ourselves before the sons and daughters of Job — that were self-righteousness indeed — we are surely not proud enough to think ourselves better than the sons of that “perfect and upright” man, “who feared God and eschewed evil.” I think I am not too severe and too strict, when I say, “It *may be*; ‘it’ *may be*; ‘look to it; take heed to yourselves, be careful, be on your watch tower. Let me give you some reasons and arguments why this caution is not unnecessary.

And, first, remember there is no place free from sin. You may set bounds about this mount, but the beast *will* touch the mountain. You may endeavor as much as you will to keep out Satan; but wherever there were two met together, Satan was ever the third. There was never a company met, but the Evil One somewhere intruded. Does he not come into your business? Do you not find him entering into your very closet? Yea, and the very table of the Lord, has not Satan sat there and tempted Judas; ay, and tempted you too? How, then, can you hope that when your family are met together, Satan shall not be there? Is it not written, “The sons of God came together, and Satan came also among them? ‘I am sure they never invited

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him; but he does not stay for that. And you will find it so. Never invite him by anything ungodly or unchristian-like. But since there are temptations everywhere, however pure and upright your intentions may be, however excellent your company, think you hear my little bell ringing — ‘It may be, it may be, it may be; “and” it may be “a blessed check to you.

Beside this, remember that there is many a special temptation where there is a loaded table. Old Quarles said, “Snares attend my board;” and certainly they do. More men have perished by fullness of bread than ever died by hunger. Hunger may break through stone walls, but I have known feasting leap over golden walls — the golden walls of grace. Some men cut their throats with their teeth, and many a man has swam to hell down his own throat. More have been drowned in the bowl, ‘tis said, than ever were drowned in the sea. I trust I need not say aught of that to you. I hope not. If there be a man here who falls into drunkenness, in God’s name, let him tremble, for there is no admittance for the drunkard into the kingdom of heaven. I am speaking now to Christian men — not to men who fall into *these* vices — and I say to them, where you use the most proper moderation in receiving the things which God gives you, where you even totally abstain from that which might be a temptation, yet even there your table may be a snare unto you. Therefore, take heed to yourself, believer, lest Satan lie in ambush beneath the family table.

Remember also, that they who sit at the table are but men, and the best of men are but men at the best, and men have so little grace, that if they be not on the watchtower, they may soon be overtaken, and they may say or do that which they will have to repent of afterwards. I have heard say that there are men who swallow mouthfuls of earth which they will have to

digest in hell, and I do not doubt it. There have been times when a happy company have gathered together, and the conversation has become trifling, then full of levity; perhaps it has gone so far, that afterwards, when they retired to their homes, they would have recalled their words, if it had been possible. Let this caution, then, sound in all our ears, "It may be — it may be — it may be!" — and let us so act, that if Christ were at the feast, we should not be ashamed to see him; let us so speak that if Christ sat at our table, we should not count it a hindrance to our joy, but rather that we should be the more free, joyous, and glad, because of such thrice-blessed company. Oh! tell me not that Christianity curbs our joy. My brethren, it shuts up one of its channels — that black and filthy kennel into which the sinner's joy must run; but it opens another channel, wider, broader, deeper,

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purer, and fills it to the very banks with joy, more lustrous and more full of glory. Think not that we who follow Christ, and seek to walk strictly in our integrity, are miserable. We tell you that our eyes sparkle as much as yours, and that we have not the redness of the eyes in the morning. We can say to the worldling that our heart, despite its sometimes heaviness, *does* rejoice in the Lord, and we have peace which is like a river, and a righteousness which is like the waves of the sea. O Christian men! let not the world think of you that you are shut out *here* from anything like happiness; but so act and so live, at all times, that you may teach men that it is possible to be happy without sin, and to be holy without being morose. This, then, is the caution which our merry bell rings out to us.

But, then, in the third place, having given a license and suggested a caution, the merry bell *provides a remedy*. "It may be — it may be we have done wrong. What then? Here is a remedy to be used, by parents, and heads of families, and by ourselves.

Job sent for his sons as a father; he sanctified them as a preacher; he sacrificed for them as a priest; by all which I understand, that he first bade them come together, and then he sanctified them: that is, he first spoke to them; commended them for the excellent and admirable manner in which they had met together, told them how pleased he was to see their love, their union; but then he said, "It may be, my sons, you are like your father; there is some sin in you, and it may be you have sinned; come, let us repent together;" and so, being, as I believe, all godly persons, they sat down and thought over their ways. Then no doubt the good old man bade them kneel down, while he prayed with them; and then he expressed his faith in the great coming Mediator, and so, though one man's faith cannot prevail for another, yet the faith of the father helped to quicken the faith of the sons, and the prayer of the father was the means of drawing forth the prayer of the sons, and so the family was sanctified. Then after that he would say, "There is no putting away of sin, except by the shedding of blood; so they fetched the bullocks, a bullock for every son and for every daughter: the old patriarch slew the victims, laid them on the altar, and as the smoke ascended, they all thought if they had sinned against God, yet the blood shed, and the victim offered could, as the type of Christ, take away their

sin. I think I see the good old man, after the sacrifice was all complete. "Now, my children," he says, "return to your homes; if you have sinned, your sin is put away; if you have transgressed, the atonement made has  
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cancelled your transgression; ye may go to your habitations, and take a father's blessing with you."

Call to your recollection, that Job is said to have seen to his sacred work "early in the morning." It is ill lying in bed when we have sin on the conscience. He that hath a sin unforgiven should never travel slowly to the cross, but run to it. So Job would sleep in the morning not an hour, till he had seen his sons and his daughters sanctified, and the sacrifice made Mark well, that "he offered according to the number of his sons "He did not leave out one. If he prayed for the eldest, he prayed for the youngest too; and if he made supplication for the sons, he did not forget the daughters Ah! parents, never forget *any* of your children; carry them *all* before God; let them all be consecrated to him, and let your earnest prayer go up for them all, from your Reuben down to your Benjamin; leave not one of them out, but pray God to grant that they may all be bound up together in the bundle of life.

And notice once again, "So did Job continually." As often as they visited, so often was there the sacrifice. I suppose they had ten feasts in the year; and it is supposed by the old commentators that they assembled on their birth-days. They were not always feasting: that were sinful. In fact, that was the sin of the old world, for which God drowned it. "They ate and they drank, they married and they were given in marriage," all which things are right enough in themselves; but if we are wholly immersed in them, always eating, always drinking, always feasting, then they become sins, and indeed at all times they become sin, unless, like Job's feasts they are sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. If our meetings be thus sanctified, we can in everything give thanks, then "he that eateth, eateth to the Lord, and giveth God thanks," and being accepted in his thankfulness, the eating is to God's glory. I say, then, my dear friends, that Job did this continually, which teaches to the parent his duty of continually pleading for his sons and daughters.

The aim of my remarks is just this. You will most of you meet together next Tuesday, and keep the household feast. I beg you to imitate Job on the morrow, and make it your special and peculiar business to call your children together, and sanctify them by prayer, and by pleading the precious sacrifice of Christ Jesus. So "it may be" there has been sin; but there will be no "may be" as to the putting away of the sin; for pleading  
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with prayer, and laying hold on the sacrifice by faith, you shall stand accepted still, both you and your households.

Now, some may think that what I have said upon this point is unnecessary, and that we ought not to speak about such common things as these. Do you suppose that the Christian pulpit was set up by God that we might always talk to you about the millennium, or the antediluvians, or the things

that are to happen in Ethiopia or Palestine? I believe that the Christian ministry has to do with you in your daily life, and the more the preacher delivers that which is practically suggestive of profit to our souls, the more closely does he keep to the Master. I am sure, if my Lord Jesus Christ were here, he would say somewhat in these words to you, "Go your way, and eat your bread with a joyous heart, for God hath accepted you through my blood, but watch, and be ye as men that look for their Lord. Still keep your lamps trimmed and your lights burning, and your loins girt about, and be ye stedfast and watch unto prayer, that should I come in the morning, or at cock-crowing, I may find you ready for my appearing."

As for you young men and women, who will be separated on that day from your own parents, having no family circle in which to join, yet perform this pleasant privilege yourselves. Set apart a season the next morning, in which by prayer and supplication you shall make confession of sin; and whenever the feast-time comes round, whenever you are invited to a social meeting, or the like, look upon it as a necessary successor of the social gathering, that there be private supplication, private confession of sin, and a personal laying hold anew upon the great sacrifice. If this be done, your meetings, instead of being unprofitable, shall be the beginning of better days to you, and you shall even grow in grace through that prayer, that repentance, and that faith, which have been suggested by your gatherings together.

I think all this is most fairly in my text; and if I ought not to preach from such a passage, then the text ought not to be in the Bible.

**II.** And now let us turn to the second head, or what is *in the text*, and that is *instructive*; we must, therefore, ring the SERMON BELL.

Well, it will be a short sermon. My sermon shall not be like the bell and preacher of St. Antholin's church, which were said to be both alike, the bell was pulled a long while, and was exceeding dreary in its tone, and the preacher was precisely the same. The sermon which is fairly in my text is this. If Job found it right with a holy jealousy to suspect lest his sons might

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have sinned, how much more do you think he suspected himself? Depend on it, he who was so anxious to keep his children clean was himself more anxious that he might always fear his God, and eschew evil. God said he was a perfect and an upright man; and yet was he jealous. How much more, then, shall you and I be jealous of ourselves? Say not in thine heart, Christian, "I may go hither and thither and may not sin;" you are never out of danger of sinning. This is a world of mire; it will be hard to pick your path, so as not to soil your garments. This is a world of pitch; you will need to watch often, if in handling it you are to keep your hands clean. There is a robber in every turn of the road to rob you of your jewels; there is a thief behind every bush; there is a temptation in every mercy; there is a snare in every joy; there is not a stone on which you tread under which there is not a viper's nest; and if you shall ever reach heaven it will be a miracle of divine grace; if you shall ever come safely home to your Father's house, it will be because your Father's power brought you there. If Job's

sons were in danger at their own tables, how much more are some of you in danger, Christians, when you have to go among the ungodly? It may be that some of you are called to do business where you hear oaths and blasphemy; your way of life is such that you cannot help being exposed to many temptations. Be on your guard. It was said of a certain great man, that he was so afraid of losing his life, that he always wore armor under his clothes. Take care *you* always wear armor. When a man carries a bombshell in his hand, he should mind that he does not go near a candle; and you too must take care that you do not go near temptation. But if you are *called* to go through the temptation, how watchful, how anxious, how careful, how guarded should you be! Brethren, I do not think that we are any of us watchful enough. I have heard of a good woman, who would never do anything till she had sought the Lord in prayer about it. Is that over custom? If we do even a common thing without seeking the Lord's direction, we may have to repent it as long as we live. Even our common actions are edged tools; we must mind how we handle them. There is nothing in this world that can foster a Christian's piety, but everything that can destroy it. How anxious should we be, then, to look up — to look up to God, that *He* may keep us! Let your prayer be, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe" let your daily cry be, you young Christians especially, ay, and you old Christians too, be, "Lord, keep me! Keep my heart, I pray thee, for out of it are the issues of my life." Do not expose yourselves unnecessarily but if called to exposure, if you have to go where the darts are flying, never go abroad without your shield; for if once the devil catches you abroad,

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and your shield at home, then he will say, "Now is my time," and he will send an arrow which may rattle between the joints of your harness, and you may fall down wounded, even though you cannot be slain. The Lord grant, then, that this sermon bell of my text may ring in your ears during the next week, and as long as ever you live, may you hear it saying to you, "Be careful; be watchful, be vigilant; danger may be in an hour when all seemeth securest to thee." Inspect the vessel, see to her keel, look to the sails; look to the rudder bands, watch every part of the ship, for the storm may be coming though the calm rule at present, and the rocks may be ahead though the breakers roll not, and the quicksands may underlie thy keel, though thou thinkest all is well. God help thee then, Christian, to watch unto prayer! What we say unto you, we say unto all: Watch!

**III.** But now what follows the text — and that is afflictive: and here let us ring the FUNERAL BELL.

What follows the text? Why hear ye this, "Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house; and behold there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fed upon the young men and they are dead, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee." Between the table and the coffin there is but a step, between the feast and the funeral there may be but a day, and the very

bell that rings the marriage peal tolls the funeral knell. Here is a death's head for you to put on your table. The old Egyptians set a corpse among the guests, that all might know that they must die: I set the bodies of Job's sons and daughters at your table, to make you think that *you* will die. Our very eating is the grave of God's mercies, and should remind us of our own graves. What do we when we eat, but patch the old tenement, put fresh plaister on the delapidated and naked rafters? So, then, we should remember, that the time will come when we can no more do this, but when the tenement itself shall be shaken and be blown down. Sinner! let no joy cross thy face, till death and thou art friends. Saint! let no joy be in thine heart either, till thou canst say, "Welcome, death; I gladly go with thee." Do nothing that you would not willingly die doing; be found in no position in which you would be unwilling to stand for ever. Be you to-day what you would wish to be in eternity; and so live, and so act, and so sit at the table, that if the wind should come and smite the four corners of the house, and you should die, yet you fall asleep at one feast, to wake up at another feast, where there would be no "may be," about sin, but where you should eat bread in the kingdom of God, and drink the new wine of which Jesus

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Christ spoke, when he rose from the supper, and left his disciples. Ah! my spirit rises on wings of delight at the solemn tones of that funeral knell, for it has more music in it after all than my merry bell. There is a pleasing joy in sorrow, and mirth is akin to sadness. Harken, friends, the bell is speaking, "GONE, GONE, GONE, GONE. "Who is that for? Who is dead in this parish? "That is poor So -and-so." My God, when it shall be my turn, may my soul behold thy face with joy. O may my spirit, when it receives the last summons, cry with delight, "Blessed be God for that sound! It was the merriest sound my soul could have desired, for now I sit with Jesus, and eat at his table, and feast with angels, and am satisfied and have the privilege of John, to lean my head upon my Savior's breast." Christian! I say never let the thought of dying plague thee; let it be a comfort to thee, and stand thou so, ready, that when the Master shall say, "Arise!" thou wilt have nothing to do but to rise at his bidding, and march to heaven, leading thy captivity captive.

But thou, sinner, when thou art sitting at thy table, think thou hearest my funeral bell tolling in thy ears, and if thou shouldst step aside, and the rest should say, "What ails you?" — if you should be compelled to rise while they are laughing, and go up stairs to pray, I shall not mind, though some may say I have made thee melancholy and have marred thy feast, for, sinner, it is no time for thee to be feasting, while God's sword is furbished, and sharp, and ready to divide soul from body. There is a time to laugh, but it is not till sin is pardoned there is a time to dance, but it is not till the heart stands with joy before the ark, there is a time to make merry, but it is not till sin is forgiven. Your time is a time to weep and a time to rend your garments, and a time to sorrow, and a time to repent. May God's Holy Spirit give you the grace! The time is *now*. And the grace being given, may you fan before the cross, and find pardon and mercy there, and then we

may say, in the words of Solomon — 'Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.'

## **SATAN CONSIDERING THE SAINTS.**

**NO. 623**

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 9TH, 1865**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**



*“And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job.”*  
*-Job 1:8.*

How very uncertain are all terrestrial things! How foolish would that believer be who should lay up his treasure anywhere, except in heaven! Job’s prosperity promised as much stability as anything can do beneath the moon. The man had round about him a large household of, doubtless devoted and attached servants. He had accumulated wealth of a kind which does not suddenly depreciate in value. He had oxen, and asses, and cattle. He had not to go to markets, and fairs, and trade with his goods to procure food and clothing, for he carried on the processes of agriculture on a very large scale round about his own homestead, and probably grew within his own territory everything that his establishment required. His children were numerous enough to promise a long line of descendants. His prosperity wanted nothing for its consolidation. It had come to its flood-tide: where was the cause which could make it ebb?

Up there, beyond the clouds, where no human eye could see, there was a scene enacted which augured no good to Job’s prosperity. The spirit of evil stood face to face with the infinite Spirit of all good. An extraordinary conversation took place between these two beings. When called to account for his doings, the evil one boasted that he had gone to and fro throughout the earth, insinuating that he had met with no hindrance to his will, and found no one to oppose his freely moving and acting at his own pleasure. He had marched everywhere like a king in his own dominions, unhindered  
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and unchallenged. When the great God reminded him that there was at least one place among men where he had no foothold, and where his power was unrecognized, namely, in the heart of Job; that there was one man who stood like an impregnable castle, garrisoned by integrity, and held with perfect loyalty as the possession of the King of Heaven; the evil one defied Jehovah to try the faithfulness of Job, told him that the patriarch’s integrity was due to his prosperity, that he served God and eschewed evil from sinister motives, because he found his conduct profitable to himself. The God of heaven took up the challenge of the evil one, and gave him permission to take away all the mercies which he affirmed to be the props of Job’s integrity, and to pull down all the outworks and buttresses and see whether the tower would not stand in its own inherent strength without them. In consequence of this, all Job’s wealth went in one black day, and not even a child was left to whisper comfort. A second interview between the Lord and his fallen angel took place. Job was again the subject of conversation; and the Great One defied by Satan, permitted him even to touch him in his bone and in his flesh, till the prince became worse than a pauper, and he who was rich and happy was poor and wretched, filled with disease from head to foot, and fain to scrape himself with a miserable potsherd, to gain a poor relief from his pain.

Let us see in this the mutability of all terrestrial things. ‘He hath founded it

upon the floods," is David's description of this world; and, if it he founded on the floods, can you wonder that it changes oft? Put not your trust in anything beneath the stars: remember that "Change" is written on the forefront of nature. Say not therefore, "My mountain standeth firm: it shall never be moved;" the glance of Jehovah's eye can shake thy mountain into dust, the touch of his foot can make it like Sinai, to melt like wax and to be altogether on a smoke. "Set your affection on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God," and let your heart and your treasure be "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal." The words of Bernard may here instruct us: "That is the true and chief joy which is not conceived from the creature, but received from the Creator, which (being once possessed thereof) none can take from thee: compared with which all other pleasure is torment, all joy is grief, sweet things are bitter, all glory is baseness, and all delectable things are despicable."

This is not, however, our subject this morning. Accept thus much as merely an introduction to our main discourse. The Lord said to Satan, "Hast thou  
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considered my servant Job?" Let us deliberate, first, in what sense the evil spirit may be said to consider the people of God; secondly, let us notice what it is that he considers about them; and then, thirdly, let us comfort ourselves by the reflection that one who is far above Satan considers us in a higher sense.

#### **I. First, then, IN WHAT SENSE MAY SATAN BE SAID TO CONSIDER THE PEOPLE OF God?**

Certainly not in the usual Biblical meaning of the term "consider." "O Lord consider my trouble." "Consider my meditation." "Blessed is he that considereth the poor." Such consideration implies good-will and a careful inspection of the object of benevolence with regard to a wise distribution of favor. In that sense Satan never considers any. If he has any benevolence, it must be towards himself; but all his considerations of other creatures are of the most malevolent kind. No meteoric flash of good flits across the black midnight of his soul. Nor does he consider us as we are told to consider the works of God, that is, in order to derive instruction as to God's wisdom and love and kindness. He does not honor God by what he sees in his works, or in his people. It is not with him, "Go to the ant; consider her ways and be wise;" but he goes to the Christian and considers his ways and becomes more foolishly God's enemy than he was before. The consideration which Satan pays to God's saints is upon this wise. He regards them with wonder, when he considers the difference between them and himself. A traitor, when he knows the thorough villainy and the blackness of his own heart, cannot help being astounded, when he is forced to believe another man to be faithful. The first resort of a treacherous heart is to believe that all men would be just as treacherous, and are really so at bottom. The traitor thinks that all men are traitors like himself, or would he, if it paid them better than fidelity. When Satan looks at the Christian,

and finds him faithful to God and to his truth, he considers him as we should consider a phenomenon—perhaps despising him for his folly, but yet marvelling at him, and wondering how he can act thus. “I,” he seems to say, “a prince, a peer of God’s parliament, would not submit my will to Jehovah: I thought it better to reign in hell than serve in heaven: I kept not my first estate, but fell from my throne: how is it that these stand? What grace is it which keeps these? I was a vessel of gold, and yet I was broken; these are earthen vessels, but I cannot break them! I could not stand in my glory—what can be the matchless grace which upholds them in their poverty, in their obscurity, in their persecution, still faithful to the God who

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doth not bless and exalt them as he did me!” It may be that he also wonders at their happiness. He feels within himself a seething sea of misery. There is an unfathomable gulf of anguish within his soul, and when he looks at believers, he sees them quiet in their souls, full of peace and happiness, and often without any outward means by which they should be comforted, yet rejoicing and full of glory. He goes up and down through the world and possesses great power, and there he has many myrmidons to serve him, yet he hath not the happiness of spirit possessed by yonder humble cottager, obscure, unknown, having no servants to wait upon her, but stretched upon the bed of weakness. He admires and hates the peace which reigns in the believer’s soul.

His consideration may go farther than this. Do you not think that he considers them to detect, if possible, any flaw and fault in them, by way of solace to himself? “They are not pure,” saith he — “these blood-bought ones—these elect from before the foundations of the world, — they still sin! These adopted children of God, for whom the glorious Son bowed his head and gave up the ghost! — even they offend!” How must he chuckle, with such delight as he is capable of, over the secret sins of God’s people, and if he can see anything in them inconsistent with their profession, anything which appears to be deceitful, and therein like himself, he rejoices. Each sin born in the believer’s heart, cries to him, “My father! my father!” and he feels something like the joy of fatherhood as he sees his foul offspring. He looks at the “old man” in the Christian, and admires the tenacity with which it maintains its hold, the force and vehemence with which it struggles for the mastery, the craft and cunning with which every now and then, at set intervals, at convenient opportunities, it putteth forth all its force. He considers our sinful flesh, and makes it one of the books in which he diligently reads. One of the fairest prospects, I doubt not, which the devil’s eye ever rests upon is the inconsistency and the impurity which he can discover in the true child of God. In this respect he had very little to consider in God’s true servant, Job.

Nor is this all, but rather just the starting point of his consideration. We doubt not that he views the Lord’s people, and especially the more eminent and excellent among them, as the great barriers to the progress of his kingdom and just as the engineer, endeavoring to make a railway, keeps his eye very much fixed upon the hills and rivers, and especially upon

the great mountain through which it will take years laboriously to bore a tunnel so Satan, in looking upon his various plans to carry on his dominion  
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in the world, considers most such men as Job. Satan must have thought much of Martin Luther. "I could ride the world over," says he "if it were not for that monk. He stands in my way. That strong-headed man hates arid mauls my firstborn son, the pope. If I could get rid of him I would not mind though fifty thousand smaller saints stood in my way." He is sure to consider God's servant, if there he "none like him," if he stand out distinct and separate from his fellows. Those of us who are called to the work of the ministry must expect from our position to be the special objects of his consideration. When the glass is at the eye of that dreadful warrior, he is sure to look out for those who by their regimentals are discovered to be the officers, and he bids his sharpshooters be very careful to aim at these, "For," saith he, "if the standard-bearer fall, then shall the victory be more readily gained to our side, and our opponents shall be readily put to rout." If you are more generous than other saints, if you live nearer to God than others, as the birds peck most at the ripest fruit, so may you expect Satan to be most busy against you. Who cares to contend for a province covered with stones and barren rocks, and ice-bound by frozen seas? But in all times there is sure to be a contention after the fat valleys where the wheatsheaves are plenteous and where the husbandman's toil is well requited, and thus, for you who honor God most, Satan will struggle very sternly. He wants to pluck God's jewels from his crown, if he can, and take the Redeemer's precious stones even from the breastplate itself He considers, then, God's people; viewing them as hindrances to his reign, he contrives methods by which he may remove them out of his way, or turn them to his own account. Darkness would cover the earth if he could blow out the lights; there would be no fruit to shake like Lebanon, if he could destroy that handful of corn upon the top of the mountains; hence his perpetual consideration is to make the faithful fail from among men.

It needs not much wisdom to discern that the great object of Satan in considering God's people is to do them injury. It is scarcely think he hopes to destroy the really chosen and blood-bought heirs of life. My notion is that he is too good a divine for that. He has been foiled so often when he has attacked God's people, that he can hardly think he shall be able to destroy the elect, for you remember the soothsayers who are very nearly related to him, spoke to Haman on this wise; "If Mordicai be of the seed of the Jews. before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him." He knows right well that there is a seed royal in the land against whom he fights in vain; and it strikes me if he could be  
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absolutely certain that any die soul was chosen of God, he would scarcely waste his time in attempting to destroy it, although he might seek to worry and to dishonor it. It is however most likely that Satan no more knows who God's elect are than we do, for he can only judge as we do by outward actions, though he can form a more accurate judgment than we c

a through longer experience, and being able to see persons in private where we cannot intrude; yet into God's book of secret decrees his black eye can never peer. By their fruits he knows them, and we know them in the same manner. Since, however, we are often mistaken in our judgment, he too may he 50; and it seems to me that he therefore makes it his policy to endeavor to destroy them all-not knowing in which case he may succeed. He goeth about seeking whom he may devour, and, as he knows not whom he may be permitted to swallow up, he attacks all the people of God with vehemence. Some one may say, "How can one devil do this?" He does not do it by himself alone. I do not know that many of us have ever been tempted directly by Satan: we may not be notable enough among men to be worth his trouble; but he has a whole host of inferior spirits under his supremacy and control, and as the centurion said of himself, so he might have said of Satan — 'he saith to this spirit, 'Do this,' and he doeth it, and to his servant, 'Go,' and he goeth.'" Thins all the servants of God will more or less come under the direct or indirect assaults of the great enemy of souls, and that with a view of destroying them; for he would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect. Where he cannot destroy, there is no doubt that Satan's object is to worry. He does not like to see God's people happy. I believe the devil greatly delights in some ministers, whose tendency in their preaching is to multiply and foster doubts and fears, and grief, amid despondency, as the evidences of God's people. "Ah," saith the devil, "preach on; you are doing my work well, for I like to see God's people mournful. If I can make them hang their harps on the willows, and go about with miserable faces, I reckon I have done my work very completely." My dear friends, let us watch against those specious temptations which pretend to make us humble, but which really aim at making us unbelieving. Our God takes no delight in our suspicions and mistrusts. See how he proves his love in the gift of his dear Son Jesus. Banish then all your ill surmisings, and rejoice in unmoved confidence. God delights to be worshipped with joy. "O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms." "Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous, and shout for joy all ye that  
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are upright in heart. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, rejoice." Satan does not like this. Martin Luther used to say, "Let us sing psalms and spite the devil," and I have no doubt Martin Luther was pretty nearly right; for that lover of discord hates harmonious, joyous praise. Beloved brother, the arch-enemy wants to make you wretched here, if he cannot have you hereafter; and in this, no doubt, he is aiming a blow at the honor of God. He is well aware that mournful Christians often dishonor the faithfulness of God by mistrusting it, and he thinks if he can worry us until we no more believe in the constancy and goodness of the Lord, he shall have robbed God of his praise. "He that offereth praise, glorifieth me," says God; and so Satan lays the axe at the root of our praise, that God may cease to be glorified.

Moreover, if Satan cannot destroy a Christian, how often has he spoilt his usefulness? Many a believer has fallen, not to break his neck-that is impossible,-but he has broken some important bone, and he has gone limping to his grave! We can recall with grief some men once eminent in the ranks of the Church, who did run well, but on a sudden, through stress of temptation, they fell into sin, and their names were never mentioned in the Church again, except with bated breath. Everybody thought and hoped they were saved so as by fire, but certainly their former usefulness never could return. It is very easy to go back in the heavenly pilgrimage, but it is very hard to retrieve your steps. You may soon turn aside and put out your candle, but you cannot light it quite so speedily. Friend, beloved in the Lord, watch against the attacks of Satan and stand fast, because you, as a pillar in the house of God are very dear to us, and we cannot spare you. As a father, or as a matron in our midst, we do you honor, and oh!-we would not be made to mourn and lament-we do not wish to be grieved by hearing the shouts of our adversaries while they cry "Aha! Alma! so would we have it," for alas! there have been many things done in our Zion which we would not have told in Gath, nor published in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised should rejoice, and the sons of the Philistines should triumph. Oh may God grant us grace, as a Church, to stand against the wiles of Satan and his attacks, that having done his worst he may gain no advantage over us, and after having considered, and considered again, and counted well our towers and bulwarks, he may be compelled to retire because his battering rams cannot jar so much as a stone from our ramparts, and his slings cannot slay one single soldier on the walls.

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Before I leave this point, I should like to say, that perhaps it may be suggested, "How is it that God permits this constant and malevolent consideration of his people by the evil one?" One answer, doubtless, is, that God knows what is for his own glory, and that he giveth no account of his matters; that having permitted free agency, and having allowed, for some mysterious reason, the existence of evil, it does not seem agreeable with his having done so to destroy Satan; but he gives him power that it may be a fair hand-to-hand fight between sin and holiness, between grace and craftiness. Besides, he it remembered, that incidentally the temptations of Satan are of service to the people of God; Fenelon says they are the file which rubs off much of the rust of self-confidence, and I may add, they are the horrible sound in the sentinel's ear, which is sure to keep him awake. An experimental divine remarks, that there is no temptation in the world which is so bad as not being tempted at all; for to be tempted will tend to keep us awake: whereas, being without temptation, flesh and blood are weak-and though the spirit may be willing, yet we may be found falling into slumber. Children do not run away from their father's side when big dogs hark at them. The howlings of the devil may tend to drive us nearer to Christ, may teach us our own weakness, may keep us upon our own watch-tower, and he made the means of preservation from other ills. Let us

‘be sober, be vigilant, because our adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour;’ and let us who are in a prominent position he permitted affectionately to press upon you one earnest request, namely, “Brethren, pray for us,” that, exposed as we are peculiarly to the consideration of Satan, we may be guarded by divine power. Let us be made rich by your faithful prayers that we may be kept even to the end.

## **II. Secondly, WHAT IS IT THAT SATAN CONSIDERS WITH A VIEW TO THE INJURY OF GOD’ S PEOPLE?**

It cannot be said of him as of God, that he knoweth us altogether; but since he has been now nearly six thousand years dealing with poor fallen humanity, he must have acquired a very vast experience in that time, and having been all over the earth, and having tempted the highest and the lowest, he must know exceedingly well what the springs of human action are, and how to play upon them. Satan watches and considers first of all our peculiar infirmities. He looks us up and down, just as I have seen a horse-dealer do with a horse; and soon finds out wherein we are faulty. I, a common observer, might think the horse an exceedingly good one, as I see

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it running up and down the road, but the dealer sees what I cannot see, and he knows how to handle the creature just in such quarters and at such points that he soon discovers any hidden mischief. Satan knows how to look at us and reckon us up from heel to head, so that he will say of this man, ‘His infirmity is lust,’ or of that other, ‘He hath a quick temper,’ or of this other, ‘He is proud,’ or of that other, ‘He is slothful.’ The eye of malice is very quick to perceive a weakness, and the hand of enmity soon takes advantage of it. When the arch-spy finds a weak place in the wall of our castle, he takes care to plant his battering-ram and begin his siege. You may conceal, even from your dearest friend, your infirmity, but you will not conceal it from your worst enemy. He has lynx eyes, and detects in a moment the joint in your harness. He goes about with a match, and though you may think you have covered all the gunpowder of your heart, yet he knows how to find a crack to put his match through, and much mischief will he do, unless eternal mercy shall prevent.

He takes care also to consider our frames and slates of mind. If the devil would attack us when our mind is in certain moods, we should be more than a match for him: he knows this, and shuns the encounter. Some men are more ready for temptation when they are distressed and desponding; the fiend will then assail them. Others will be more liable to take fire when they are jubilant and full of joy; then will he strike his spark into the tinder. Certain persons, when they are much vexed and tossed to and fro, can be made to say almost anything; and others, when their souls are like perfectly placid waters, are just then in a condition to be navigated by the devil’s vessel. As the worker in metals knows that one metal is to be worked at such a heat, and another at a different temperature; as those who have to deal with chemicals know that at a certain heat one fluid will boil, while

another reaches the boiling-point much earlier, so Satan knows exactly the temperature at which to work us to his purpose. Small pots boil directly they are put on the fire, and so little men of quick temper are soon in a passion; larger vessels require more time and coal before they will boil, but when they do boil, it is a boil indeed, not soon forgotten or abated. The enemy, like a fisherman, watches his fish, adapts his bait to his prey; and knows in what seasons and times the fish are most likely to bite. This hunter of souls comes upon us unawares, and often we are overtaken in a fault, or caught in a trap through an unwatchful frame of mind. That rare collector of choice sayings, Thomas Spencer, has the following, which is much to the point:- The chameleon when he lies on the grass to catch flies

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and grasshoppers, taketh upon him the color of the grass, as the polypus doth the color of the rock under which he lurketh that the fish may boldly come near him without any suspicion of danger. In like manner, Satan turneth himself into that shape which we least fear, and sets before us such objects of temptation as are most agreeable to our natures, that so he may the sooner draw us into his net; he sails with every wind, and blows us that way which we incline ourselves through the weakness of nature. Is our knowledge in matter of faith deficient? He tempts us to error. Is our conscience tender? He tempts us to scrupulosity, and too much preciseness. Hath our conscience, like the ecliptic line, some latitude? He tempts us to carnal liberty. Are we bold spirited? He tempts us to presumption. Are we timorous and distrustful? He tempteth us to desperation. Are we of a flexible disposition? He tempteth us to inconstancy. Are we stiff? He labors to make obstinate heretics, schismatics, or rebels of us. Are we of an austere temper? He tempteth us to cruelty. Are we soft and mild? He tempteth us to indulgence and foolish pity. Are we hot in matters of religion? He tempteth us to blind zeal and superstition. Are we cold? He tempteth us to Laodicean lukewarmness. Thus doth he lay his traps, that one way or other, he may ensnare. He also takes care to consider our position among men. There are a few persons who are most easily tempted when they are alone; they are the subjects then of great heaviness of mind, and they may be driven to most awful crimes: perhaps the most of us are more liable to sin when we are in company. In some company I never should be led into sin; into another society I could scarcely venture. Many are so full of levity, that those of us who are inclined the same way can scarcely look them in the face without feeling our besetting sin set a-going; and others are so sombre, that if they meet a brother of like mould, they are pretty sure between them to invent an evil report of the goodly hand. Satan knows where to overtake you in a place where you lie open to his attacks; he will pounce upon you, swoop like a bird of prey from the sky, where he has been watching for the time to make his descent with a prospect of success.

How, too, will he consider our condition in the world! He looks at one man, and says, 'That man has property; it is of no use my trying such arts with him; but here is another man who is very poor, I will catch



him in that net.” Then, again, he looks at the poor man, and says, “Now, I cannot tempt him to this folly, but I will lead the rich man into it.” As the sportsman has a gun for wild fowl, and another for deer and game, so has  
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Satan a different temptation for various orders of men. I do not suppose that the Queen’s temptation ever will annoy Mary the kitchen -maid. I do not suppose, on the other hand, that Mary’s temptation will ever be very serious to me. Probably you could escape from mine-I do not think you could; and I sometimes fancy I could bear yours — though I question if I could. Satan knows, however, just where to smite us, and our position, our capabilities, our education, our standing in society, our calling, may all be doors through which he may attack us. You who have no calling at all, are in peculiar peril-I wonder the devil does not swallow you outright. The most likely man to go to hell is the man who has nothing to do on earth. I say that seriously. I believe that there cannot happen a much worse evil to a person than to be placed where he has no work; and if I should ever be in such a state, I would get employment at once, for fear I should be carried off, body and soul, by the evil one. Idle people tempt the devil to tempt them. Let us have something to do, let us keep our minds occupied, for, if not, we make room for the devil. Industry will not make us gracious, but the want of industry may make us vicious. Have always something on the anvil or in the fire.

*“In books, or work, or healthful play,  
I would be busy too,  
For Satan finds some mischief still  
For idle hands to do.”*

So Watts taught us in our childhood, and so let us believe in our manhood. Books, or works, or such recreations as are necessary for health, should occupy our time; for if I throw myself down in indolence, like an old piece of iron, I must not wonder that I grow rusty with sin.

Nor have I done yet. Satan, when he makes his investigations, notices all the objects of our affection I doubt not when he went round Job’s house, he observed it as carefully as thieves do a jeweller’s premises when they mean to break into them. They very cunningly take account of every door, window, and fastening: they fail not to look at the next-door house; for they may have to reach the treasure through the building which adjoins it. So, when the devil went round, jotting down in his mind all Job’s position, he thought to himself, “There are the camels and the oxen, the asses, and the servants—yes, I can use all these very admirably.” “Then,” he thought, “there are the three daughters! There are the ten sons, and they go feasting—I shall know where to catch them, and if I can just blow the house down when they are feasting, that will afflict the father’s mind the more  
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severely, for he will say ‘O that they had died when they had been praying, rather than when they had been feasting and drinking wine.’ I will put down too in the inventory,” says the devil, “his wife —I dare say I shall want her,” and accordingly it came to that. Nobody could have done what Job’s

wife did- none of the servants could have said that sad sentence so stinging- or, if she meant it very kindly, none could have said it with such a fascinating air as Job's own wife, "Bless God and die," as it may be read, or "Curse God and die." Ah, Satan, thou hast ploughed with Job's heifer, but thou hast not succeeded; Job's strength lies in his God, not in his hair, or else thou mightest have shorn him as Samson was shorn! Perhaps the evil one had even inspected Job's personal sensibilities, and so selected that form of bodily affliction which he knew to be most dreaded by his victim. He brought upon him a disease which Job may have seen and shuddered at, in poor men outside the city gates. Brethren, Satan knows quite as much in regard to you. You have a child, and Satan knows that you idolize it. "Ah," says he, "there is a place for my wounding him." Even the partner of your bosom may be made a quiver in which hell's arrows shall be stored till the time may come and then she may prove the bow from which Satan will shoot them. Watch even your neighbor and her that lieth in your bosom, for you know not how Satan may get an advantage over you. Our habits, our joys, our sorrows, our retirements, our public positions, all may be made weapons of attack by this desperate foe of the Lord's people. We have snares everywhere; in our bed and at our table, in our house and in the street. There are gins and trap-falls in company; there are pits when we are alone. We may find temptations in the house of God as well as in the world; traps in our high estate, and deadly poisons in our abasement. We must not expect to be rid of temptations till we have crossed the Jordan, and then, thank God, we are beyond gunshot of the enemy. The last howling of the dog of hell will be heard as we descend into the chill waters of the black stream, but when we hear the hallelujah of the glorified, we shall have done within the black prince for ever and for ever.

### **III. Satan considered but THERE WAS A HIGHER CONSIDERATION WHICH OVERRODE HIS CONSIDERATION.**

In times of war, the sappers and miners of one party will make a mine, and it is a very common counteractive for the sappers and miners of the other party to counter-mine by undermining the first mine. This is just what God does with Satan. Satan is mining, and he thinks to light the fuse and to blow up God's building, but all the while God is undermining him, and he

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blows up Satan's mine before he can do any mischief. The devil is the greatest of all fools. He has more knowledge but less wisdom than any other creature, he is more subtle than all the beasts of the field, but it is well called subtlety, not wisdom. It is not true wisdom; it is only another shape of folly. All the while that Satan was tempting Job, he little knew that he was answering God's purpose, for God was looking on and considering the whole of it, and holding the enemy as a man holds a horse by its bridle. The Lord had considered exactly how far he would let Satan go. He did not the first time permit him to touch his flesh- perhaps that was more than Job at that time could have borne. Have you never noticed that if you are in good strong bodily health you can bear losses and crosses, and

even bereavements with something like equanimity? Now that was the case with Job. Perhaps if the disease had come first and the rest had followed, it might have been a temptation too heavy for him, but God who knows just how far to let the enemy go, will say to him, "Thus far, and no farther." By degrees he became accustomed to his poverty; in fact, the trial had lost all its sting the moment Job said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." That enemy was slain - nay it was buried and this was the funeral oration, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." When the second trial came, the first trial had qualified Job to bear the second. It may be a more severe trial for a man in the possession of great worldly wealth suddenly to be deprived of the bodily power of enjoying it, than to lose all first, and then lose the health necessary to its enjoyment. Having already lost all, he might almost say, "I thank God that now I have nothing to enjoy, and therefore the loss of the power to enjoy it is not so wearisome. I have not to say, 'How I wish I could go out in my fields and see to my servants, for they are all dead. I do not wish to see my children-they are all dead and gone-I am thankful that they are; better so, than that they should see their poor father sit on a dunghill like this.'" He might have been almost glad if his wife had gone too, for certainly she was not a very particular mercy when she was spared; mind possibly, if he had had all his children about him, it might have been a harder trial than it was. The Lord who weighs mountains in scales, had meted out his servant's woe.

Did not the Lord also consider how he should sustain his servant under the trial? Beloved, you do not know how blessedly our God poured the secret oil upon Job's fire of grace while the devil was throwing buckets of water on it. He saith to himself, "If Satan shall do much, I will do more; if he takes away much, I will give more; if he tempts the man to curse, I will fill

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him so full of love to me that he shall bless me. I will help him; I will strengthen him; yea, I will uphold him with the right hand of my righteousness." Christian, take those two thoughts amid put them under your tongue as a wafer made with honey-you will never be tempted without express license from the throne where Jesus pleads, and, on the other hand, when he permits it, he will with the temptation make a way of escape, or give you grace to stand under it.

In the next place, the Lord considered how to sanctify Job by this trial. Job was a much better man at the end of the story than he was at the beginning. He was "a perfect and an upright man" at first but there was a little pride about him. We are poor creatures to criticise such a man as Job-but still there was in him just a sprinkling of self-righteousness. I think, and his friends brought it out. Eliphaz and Zophar said such irritating things, that poor Job could not help replying in strong terms about himself that were rather too strong, one thinks; there was a little too much self-justification. He was not proud as some of us are, of a very little-he had much to be proud of, as the world would allow-but yet there was the tendency to be exalted with it; and though the devil did not know it, perhaps if he had left Job alone, that pride might have run to seed, and Job might have sinned;

but he was in such a hurry, that he would not let the ill seed ripen, but hastened to cut it up, and so was the Lord's tool to bring Job into a more humble, and consequently a more safe and blessed state of mind. Moreover, observe how Satan was a lacquey to the Almighty! Job all this while was being enabled to earn a greater reward. All his prosperity is not enough; God loves Job so much, that he intends to give him twice the property; he intends to give him his children again; he means to make him a more famous man than ever; a man whose name shall ring down the ages; a man who shall be talked of through all generations. He is not to be the man of Uz, but of the whole world. He is not to be heard of by a handful in one neighborhood, but all men are to hear of Job's patience in the hour of trial. Who is to do this? Who is to fashion the trump of fame through which Job's name is to be blown? The devil goes to the forge, and works away with all his might, to make Job illustrious! Foolish devil! he is piling up a pedestal on which God will set his servant Job, that he may be looked upon with wonder by all ages.

To conclude. Job's afflictions and Job's patience have been a lasting blessing to the Church of God, and they have inflicted incredible disgrace upon Satan. If you want to make the devil angry throw the story of Job in

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his teeth. If you desire to have your own confidence sustained, may God the Holy Ghost lead you into the patience of Job. Oh! how many saints have been comforted in their distress by this history of patience! How many have been saved out of the jaw of the lion, and from the paw of the bear by the dark experiences of the patriarch of Uz. O arch fiend, how art thou taken in thine own net! Thou hast thrown a stone which has fallen on thine own head. Thou madest a pit for Job, and hast fallen into it thyself; thou art taken in thine own craftiness. Jehovah has made fools of the wise and driven the diviners mad. Brethren, let us commit ourselves in faith to the care and keeping of God—come poverty, come sickness, come death, we will in all things through Jesus Christ's blood be conquerors, and by the power of his Spirit we shall overcome at the last. I would God we were all trusting in Jesus. May those who have not trusted him be led to begin this very morning, and God shall have all the praise in us all, evermore. Amen.

# THE SORROWFUL MAN'S QUESTION.

NO. 2666

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*“Why is light given to a man whose way is hid,  
and whom God hath hedged in?”—Job 3.23.*

I AM very thankful that so many of you are glad and happy. There is none too much joy in the world, and the more that any of us can create, the better. It should be a part of our happiness, and a man part of it, to try to make other people glad. “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people,” is a commission which many of us ought to feel is entrusted to us. If your own cup of joy is full, let it run over to others who have a more trying experience. If you yourself are privileged to have the flashing eye, and the elastic step, and the bounding heart, be mindful to speak words of good cheer to such as are in bonds. Feel as if you were bound with them; and try to revive their drooping spirits. That is what I am going to aim at to-night, so you will excuse me if I bid “good -bye” for a while to you joyous ones, and just seek after those who have no such delight as you now possess; but who are, on the contrary, suffering from extreme depression of spirit. Sometimes, we must single out the wounded ones of the flock; that is what I am about to do; yet I feel sure that, while some few will be distinctly sought after, there will be something that may be of use to the many who are in a less sorrowful condition. The ninety-and-nine shall get their full portion although the shepherd goes specially after the lost one.

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The question of our text was put by Job when he first opened his mouth in the extreme bitterness of his anguish: “Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?” His case was so sad and so trying that life itself became irksome to him. I suppose that by ‘light’ here he means the power to see the light, the life which lives in the light. “Why,” he asked in his agony, “is that continued to a man when God hath filled him with sorrow upon sorrow!” The verses preceding our text are to the same

effect: "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul; which long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures; which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad, when they can find the grave." The patriarch was weary of living; and perhaps we shall not wonder so much at his pitiful lamentation if we recollect the extreme distress into which he had been brought. He had lost all his property; by stroke upon stroke, all his wealth had been taken away from him. He might have borne that if it had been his only loss; but close upon the heels of it had come sore bereavement. His happy children, for whom he daily cared, and whom he had tenderly loved, were all destroyed in a moment, while they were feasting in the house of one of their brothers. The calamity seemed all the greater because it came in the very midst of their joys. Then as if that was not trial enough, Job was himself smitten from head to foot with sore boils. If you have ever seen a person in that condition, I am sure that you must pity him. There is a dear friend of ours, now with God, whom I visited when he was in much the same state as that. Perhaps he had not to endure quite all that Job suffered, but something exceedingly like it had befallen him. The irritation, the pain, and the depression of spirit that come with that particular form of disease, all tend to make us treat very gently the petulant expressions of Job. We may not excuse them, but only he amongst us that is without; fault may take up the first stone to cast at him. I will warrant that, if we had suffered as he did, and been brought to poverty, and left childless, and then been tortured as he was from head to foot, and even his wife rendering him no comfort, but, on the contrary, adding to his grief and woe, we might have said even worse things than Job did. For remember, dear friends, that he said nothing against God in the time of his deepest sorrow. He cursed most vehemently the day of his birth, and wished that he had never existed, or that he might speedily pass away to sleep with the generations that are dead; and he used unwise and foolish expressions, but any of us might have used far worse words if we had been in his case, so we will not condemn him, but we will see what lessons we can learn from his experience.

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I think that Job's experience teaches us the very small value of temporal things. To have spiritual blessings, and to enjoy them, is one thing; but to have earthly things, and to enjoy them, is quite another thing. You may have an abundance of them, and yet they may be utterly tasteless to you, or they may even be bitter as gall to you, and you may curse the day that gave them to you. I am sure that it is so, because Job speaks thus concerning life, which is the chief of all earthly things. It is true, although Satan said it, "All that a man hath will he give for his life;" yet we may be brought into such a condition that we may wish that we had never been born. Life itself may become, so wearisome to us that we may even wish to escape from it, that we may be at rest, as we hope. Job had once enjoyed every comfort that heart could desire, and he still had this blessing of life left to him; but even that had become curdled and soured, the last thing to which a man usually clings had become distasteful and disgusting to him, so that he set

no store by it, but longed to get rid of it. O beloved, seek eternal treasures, for there is no moth that can eat them, no rust can mar them, no fermentation or corruption can injure them; but, as for the things of time and sense, if you do possess them, use them as though you had them not, and never make them your gods, for they are but as a shadow that passeth away in a moment. They come, and they are gone; and if you make idols of them, the Lord may permit you still to retain them, but take away from you all power to enjoy them. You may have abundance, and yet not be able to relish even the bread you eat, or the drink that refreshes you. You may have a loss of health, or a loss of all power to be happy, though everything that men think to be the cause of happiness may be laid abundantly at your feet.

With this as a preface, I now come to my text, and ask you to notice, first, *the case which raises the question*, secondly, *the question itself*; and, thirdly, *answers which may be given to the question*: “Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?”

**I.** First, notice THE CASE WHICH RAISES THE QUESTION: “Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?”

That is to say, “Why does God permit men to live *when their souls are under deep depression and gloom?* Why does he not let them die at once? When their days are spent in weariness, and their nights yield them neither rest nor refreshment,— when they look upward, and see nothing to give them hope, or onward, and behold nothing but that which is even more

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dreadful than the present,— why is it that God continues life to those who are in such sad circumstances?” Well, dear friends, if life were not continued to any but those who are bright of eye, and fleet of foot, and joyous of heart, how few would live! And if, the first time that darkness fell upon a man’s pathway, he were to be permitted to die, well, then, the whole population of the globe would soon be swept away. If our murmuring the petulance demanded that we should die rather than suffer, then we should soon pass away, and be gone. But that is the case which is supposed in Job’s question, if a man find, himself entirely in the dark, if God’s presence be completely hidden from him, and he can find no joy in anything whatever, and his spirit is tossed to and fro with worries and perplexities, the question is, “Why does he continue to live”

Yet, further, the man here described is in such trouble that *he can see no reason for to trouble*. His “way is hid.” Job could not perceive, in his own case, any cause for the distress into which he had been plunged. as far as he knew, he had walked uprightly. He had not sinned so as to be now suffering the result of his sin. He had not committed a crime, else he would have understood the punishment when it came upon him. He looked back upon all that he had done, and he could not, at his first glance, see in himself any cause for his affliction. Nor, indeed, dear brethren, was there any cause why all these things should have happened to Job by way of punishment, for the inspired record concerning him is that he was “perfect

and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.”

Even the devil himself, who kept a sharp look-out with his malicious eye, could not find any fault whatsoever with which he could charge Job. He deserved the character which God had given to him, though Satan did insinuate that he had acted from interested motives, he asked, “Doth Job fear God for nought.” That question has always seemed to me to be a very crafty one, yet very foolish, for if it could have been proved that Job had feared or served God for nought, then the devil would have said at once that God was a bad master, and that there was no reward for those who served him. But now that he finds God putting a hedge of roses round about Job, and sheltering him on every side, he declares that Job was only pious because he found it profitable. He could find no other fault with him; and even that accusation was not true.

Job, on his part, remembered how he had fed the widow, and succoured the fatherless,— how he had acted justly towards his fellow-creatures in the

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midst of an unjust generation, and how, amidst a mass of idolaters, he had worshipped God, and God alone. He had never kissed his hand in adoration to the moon, as she walked along her shining way in all her queenly brightness, nor had he ever bowed himself down to the host of heaven, as nearly all around him had done. He stood alone, or almost alone, in that age, as a true and faithful servant of Jehovah; yet his sorrows and trials were multiplied. And so, his way was hidden, he was hedged in by God, and he could not make it out. You know, dear friends, that it is often a great aggravation of our troubles when we do not know why they come. A man, when he is ill, usually wants to know what is the nature of his disease, and how he came to be attacked by it. When we see a person suffering, we generally ask “Where did you catch that cold?” or, “What was it that brought on that congestion?” We always like to know the cause of the complaint, and Job wanted to ascertain the reason for his trouble, but he could not find it out, and this rendered it all the more mysteriously grievous to him, and therefore he enquired, “Why do I continue to live, when I have come into such darkness as this?”

It was equally trying to Job that *he did not now what to do*. There seemed to be nothing that he could do. He was stripped of all his earthly possessions. Those ashes where he sat formed his uncomfortable couch, and the sole property that remained to him was a potsherd, with which, in his desperation, he began to scrape himself because of his sore boils. What could he do in such a case as that? There was no physician there to cure him of his sad complaint.

True, there were his three friends; but all that they could do, or, at least, the best thing they did, was to sit still, and say nothing. When they opened their mouths, it was only to pour vinegar into his wounds, and to increase his agony tenfold. What could poor Job do under such circumstances. His very helplessness tended to increase his wretchedness.

Am I addressing anyone who is in that kind of perplexity I think I hear someone moaning, “I don’t know which way to turn. I have done



everything I can think of, and I cannot tell what is to come next. I sit in darkness, and can see no light. Why I am brought to this pass, I cannot tell; or what is the reason for it, I cannot make out anyhow. If I could light upon some great and grievous fault which had brought me where I am, I could understand it; but as it is, I am in thick Egyptian night about it all, and I know not what to do. Why does a man continue to live when his way

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is thus hidden, or hedged up.” If that is the way you talk, you are in very much the same sort of plight that the patriarch was in when he uttered the mournful question which forms our text.

What was still worse to Job was that *he could not see any way out of his trouble*. He said that God had hedged him in, not with a hedge of roses, but with a barrier of briars. Whatever he tried to do, he found himself obstructed in doing it. And there are men, now in this world, whose sorrows are the more grievous because everything they do to alleviate their distress seems only to increase it. Their efforts are all fruitless; they are like men who have become entangled in a bog; the more they struggle to get out, the deeper they descend; They strive to their very utmost, but it is all in vain; they rise up early, they sit up late, and they eat the bread of carefulness mingled with their tears; but there is a blight on all that they do. Nothing prospers with them; they are at their wits end. Then they begin to cry, ‘Oh, that we had never been born, rather than that we should have been born to such trouble as this! ‘Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?’”

I have thus stated the case which gave rise to Job’s question, and I should not wonder if I have, at the same time, stated the case of some who are here. Do not think it has been a waste of time for any of you to hear this sorrowful description of a very sad condition of heart and mind. If I should only have been describing one such individual, let us all feel sympathy for him or for her, and let us unite in breathing the silent petition, ‘Lord, bring thy servant out of prison.’”

**II.** Now, secondly, we are to consider THE QUESTION ITSELF: “Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?” in other words, Why is the light of life given to him who is in the darkness of misery?

Well, first, let me say that *it is a very unsafe question for anyone to ask*. Brethren, We are sure to get into mischief as soon as we begin catechising God, and asking “why?” and “wherefore?” Such questioning comes not well from our lips. He is the Potter, and we are the clay in his hands. ‘Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonor?’” God’s eternal purposes are a great deep, and when we try to fathom them, we utterly fail. Divine Sovereignty is an ocean without a bottom and without a shore, and all we

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can do is to set our sail, and steer by the chart which he has given us, and all the while believe that, as we sang just now,—

*“E’en the hour that darkest seemeth,  
Will his changeless goodness prove;  
From the mist his brightness streameth,  
God is wisdom, God is love.”*

Voyaging in that fashion, we shall be safe indeed. But to try to cross such a sea, without rudder, or chart, or compass,— this is a venture— some piece of sailing which we had better not undertake. I tremble whenever I have to think of the wondrous ways of God; I mean, when I have to think of them after the manner of the reasoner, and not after the style of the believer. Well did Milton describe the fallen spirits sitting, in little groups, discussing predestination and the counsels of the Eternal. You know how Paul answers the man who calls in question the dealings of God either in providence or in grace: “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God.” Job received his answer when the Lord spake to him out of the whirlwind, and said, “Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?” What God said to him was not so much a vindication of the ways of providence, but a revelation of his matchless power as the Creator and the Ruler of the universe; and, though men may not like to hear it, yet there is, in the thunder of God’s power, an answer, which, though it may not always answer the sceptic, but ultimately overpower and silence him. As for God’s child, he sits down in the shadow of that black cloud which is the canopy of Deity, and he is well content to be still in the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. Imitate him, my brother, and do not keep asking God the why and the wherefore of what he does. It is an unsafe thing to ask such questions.

Next, *it reflects upon God*. In this question of Job, there is really a reflection upon the wisdom of the Almighty. He has given the light of life to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God hath hedged in, yet Job asks, “Why did he do it?” I think that, far too often, we indulge our questionings of divine providence. Is God to stand and answer to you and me for what he does? Is he bound to tell us the reason why he does it? Job’s friend Elihu said, “God is greater than man. Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters.” If there be his equal anywhere, let him meet him in the field, and they shall speak together; but to us worms of the dust answers shall not be given if we haughtily put questions to him of “what?” and “why?” and “wherefore?”

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To accept the Lord’s will with absolute submission, is after the manner of the Son of God himself, for he prayed, in the hour of his greatest agony, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.” But to cavil and to question, is after the manner of the prince of darkness, who is ever seeking to dispute the sovereignty of God. Therefore, beloved, let no question of ours reflect upon the Lord’s love, or the dispensations of his providence.

Further, We may rest quite certain that *there must be an answer to this question*, a good answer, and an answer in harmony with the character of God. If there are men and women to be found still sitting in the darkness of

grief and sorrow, and we ask why they are allowed to continue to live, there is a reply possible to that enquiry, and a reply consistent with boundless grace and infinite compassion; but, mark you, that reply may never be given, or, if it is given, we may be incapable of understanding it. There is much that God does that could not be understood, even by those great men, of modern times, who would fain sit on the throne of the Eternal and judge him,—

***“Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod,  
Rejudge his judgments, be the god of God.”***

I say that there are some answers, which God might give if he pleased, but which even they could not comprehend with all their wit and wisdom, and you and I must often come to a point where we have to stop and say, “We cannot understand this;” and we shall be still wiser if we add, “Nor do we wish to do so.” Brothers and sisters, I, for one, have had enough of searching into reasons; I am perfectly satisfied to accept facts. I am ready to bow my reason before the Lord, and to accept whatever he says. If I do not, how little shall I ever know! What is there that I do really understand? I confess that I see profound mysteries about the commonest phenomena around me; I cannot fully comprehend anything when I get right to the bottom of it. There is, on every hand, a deep which I cannot fathom; how, then, shall I understand the ways of God, and measure him with my finite mind, comparing so many inches with the Infinite, weighing so many ounces against the Omnipotent, and reckoning so many seconds in contrast with the Eternal? No, brethren, for such calculations, you have nothing to measure with; you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep, yea, bottomless. So, the less of such questions as Job’s any of us ask, the better,  
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for, even if we had the answer to them, we might not be able to understand it.

Let me remind you also that, however important this question may seem to be, *it is not the most profitable question*. I have heard of a farmer, whose boy said to him, “Father, the cows are in the corn; however did they get there? Boy,” he replied, “never mind how they got there; our work is to get them out as soon as we can.” That is our main business also, to get the cows out of the corn; how they got there is a matter that can be thought of by-and-by when we have nothing else to do. The origin of evil is a point that puzzles a great many people; but I hope you will not worry your brain over that question; if you do, you will be very foolish. But if you are wise men, you will not trouble yourself so much about the origin of evil, as about how to conquer it, in yourself, and in others. Get the cows out of the corn, and then find out how they got in, if you can, by so doing, prevent their getting in again.

There will be space enough, and time enough, and better light, to discuss these questions when we get up yonder before the throne of the Eternal. If their solution is of any real consequence to us, we shall get them solved then; but, meanwhile, we are color-blind; or, if we are not, it is so dark and so misty here, and we have so many other more pressing matters to attend

to, that we had better leave these whys and wherefores, and rely on the infallible wisdom and the infinite love of God. If he has done any— thing, it is quite certain that it is right and just; yea, if it has come from his dear hand, it is also gracious and kind. There is more sublimity in being like a little child in the presence of the Eternal than there is in trying to ape the Deity, for that is but a mockery,— a thing to be despised;— nay more, it is the greatest insult we can offer to God, and it is a pity and a shame that any of us should so live and act. Put aside everything of the kind, I implore you, and in very truth submit yourselves unto God.

**III.** But now, in the last place, speaking to the sorrowful person, I want to mention SOME ANSWERS WHICH MAY BE GIVEN TO HIS QUESTION. “Why do I continue to live,” asks he, “in such sorrow as this? Why does not God take from me the light of life when he does not permit me to enjoy the light of comfort?”

Supposing that you are a child of God, I will give you one answer which ought to satisfy you, though, perhaps, it will not if your spirit is rebellious. *God wills it.* If you are one of his true children, that is all the answer that

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you will require; and you will say, with those early christians, “The will of the Lord be done;” and with your Lord himself, “Not my will, but thine, be done.” It was enough for Christ that his suffering was in accordance with the Father’s will, so he bowed before him in unquestioning submission; and shall not you, the disciple, be content to fare as your Master did? Will not you be perfectly satisfied with that which satisfied your Lord? it is the will of the Lord; then what need is there of any further question if you are his child?

But supposing that you are an unconverted person, and you say, “I cannot bear to live in such sorrow as this, why is my life prolonged “the answer is, “Because of God’s mercy to you.” Where would you go to be better off than you are here? You who have no hope in Christ, and yet who say, “I wish I were dead,” you know not what you are saying. You wish you were dead? But what would be your portion after death? What! Do you really wish to hear that dread sentence which must be passed upon you if you die unregenerate: “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels”? Do you really desire to feel the full weight of divine justice! Ah! I hope that you are not so foolish. You have spoken in petulance, and do not mean what you have said; It may be hard for you to live, but it would be harder far for you to die, and then to live for ever in a death that never dies. God grant that, you may never know that awful doom!

Moreover, the answer to your question is that the Lord spares you *because he would fain save you.* You are kept alive that you may hear again that voice of mercy which says, “Repent ye, and be converted.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” God comes to you in this time of suffering, that he may stop you in your sin, and make you think. Even to the most careless and giddy among you, during the poignancy of your

grief, he says, "Now, my prodigal child, thou hast wasted thy substance in riotous living, thy belly is hungry, and thou hast nothing with which to fill it; arise, and go unto thy Father, for he will receive thee."

Come then, sorrowful one, it may be that thy sorrows will end when thy sins end; certainly, when thou comest to Christ to be forgiven, thou shalt find divine consolation, even if all thy griefs do not at once disappear.

Anyhow, it would be better to be whipped all the way to heaven than to be carried down to hell "on flowery beds of ease." Pray this prayer, "O Lord, let me enter into life with one eye and one hand, halt or maimed, rather

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than, having two eyes and two hands, to be cast into hell!" This is one answer to your question: the Lord lets you live, even though it is in pain and grief, because he has purposes of love and mercy towards you.

Therefore, be not anxious to die; but be thankful that you are still permitted to tarry upon gospel ground. Nay, do not be content to tarry there, but fly at once to the God of grace; look this very instant to Jesus, for—

***"There is life for a look at the Crucified One;***

***There is life at this moment for thee;***

***Then look, sinner—look unto him, and be saved—***

***Unto him who was nail'd to the tree."***

One believing glance of the eye to him who is the sinner's Substitute, and all transgression is forgiven; therefore, yield yourself unto him, trust to his finished work, and eternal life is yours. And when you have that unspeakable blessing, why need you sorrow more?

As for the child of God, to whom I now again speak, if you ask, in a timid, childlike way, "Why do I continue to live in such sorrow as I have to endure?" I would, as your brother, try to answer you. First, it may be that all this trouble has come upon you *to let you know what is in you*. None of us know what there is in us until we are put to the test. We are wonderfully sweet-tempered until somebody touches one of our sore places; and then, ah, me! there is not much sweetness of temper left after that. We are remarkably patient until we get a sharp neuralgic pain, perhaps; and then, where is all our boasted patience gone. We are very generous until we ourselves are somewhat pinched, and then we become as tight-fisted as others whom we have condemned. We do not know what is really in us while all goes smoothly and well; but sickness, and sorrow, and bereavement, and poverty, and hunger, will soon let us see what we are. They make a mental or moral photograph of us, and when we look at the picture we say, "Oh, no! that cannot be our likeness;" but we look again and again, and then we say, "Alas! it is even so; but we did not know we were like that. Now we see our faults and our follies. O Lord, thou hast searched us, and tried us, and shown us the wicked ways that are in us; now purge us from them, and make us clean and pure in thy sight!" That is one reason, and a very good reason, for sharp affliction,— to let us see ourselves as we really are.

The next is that, *often, our trials bring us very near to our God*. Your children run down the meadow to play, and they get a good way off from

home in the sunny day, as they ramble along gathering their buttercups and daisies; but by-and-by, the sun sets, and night comes on, and now they cry to be at home. Just so; and you, in all your pretty ways of pleasure in your happy home, though you are a child of God, sometimes forget him.

Sorrowfully must you remember that sad fact. But now the night comes on, and there is danger all around you; so you begin to cry for your Father, and you would fain be back to fellowship with him; and that is a blessed trouble which brings us near to our God. Christ's sheep ought to be thankful for the ugly black dog that keeps them from going astray, or fetches them back when they have wandered from the Shepherd. Perhaps Christ will call that black dog off when he has answered the Master's purpose, and brought you near his side.

Dear child of God, anything that promotes your sanctification, or increases your spirituality, is a good thing for you. I have had my share of physical pain, and perhaps more of it than most who are here; and bless God for it. If it comes again, I ask him for grace to bless him for it then; and now that it has gone for a while, I freely bless him for it, for I cannot tell you all the good that it has wrought in me. Oh! how often a proud spirit has been cut back by affliction and trial, like a vine that is made to bleed, that the clusters that followed the pruning might be all the better and richer! The mown grass is very sweet and fine; and so, often, are believers who have been deeply tried. This tribulation, as Paul says, "worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Wherefore, bow humbly before the Lord, my tried and afflicted friend, and see at least some of the reasons why he thus puts you in the dark chamber of tribulation.

Perhaps, dear brother, you are being very greatly tried, more than most people, *to fit you to be an example to others*. The Lord means to make a veteran of you, so you must be the first in the breach, or you must lead the forlorn hope. He puts you on the hardest service because he wants others of his children to be able to learn from you. I do not know that we should ever have heard anything of Job if it had not been for his troubles; he was a most respectable Eastern farmer, with a considerable estate, very much like a great many country gentlemen we have in England, who may be heard of at the Quarter Sessions, or the corn and cattle market, but nothing more will be known of them unless you go to the parish church, and see some memorial of them stuck up there. Job would have been much the same sort

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of man as that,— an Oriental magnate, who would have lived, and died, and been forgotten; but now his fame will last as long as the world endures, and 'ye have heard of the patience of Job. You have all heard of it, and Job is one of the undying names. So it may be with you, beloved. You are, perhaps, to sail through seas of trouble to reach your crown. God means to use you in his service, and make you a blessing to others, and a teacher of others, by passing you again and again through the fire. One of the ancient

warriors said, "I cannot use in battle a sword that has not been oftentimes annealed; but give me a Damascus blade that has been so prepared, and I will cut through a coat of mail, or split a man from head to foot at a single stroke. It gets its temper and keenness of edge from having slept with the flames again and again." So must it be with believers. Full often, they are unfit for God to use till they have been sorely tried.

Perhaps, dear friend, the Lord is putting you through all this trouble— (only I hardly like to say it aloud, I must whisper it in your ears somehow) *because he loves you more than anybody else.* Dear Samuel Rutherford, when he wrote to a lady who had lost, I think, seven children, congratulated her, and said, "I am sure that the Well -beloved has a strong affection for your ladyship, for he will have all your heart. He has taken away all these children that there may not be a nook or a corner for anybody else but for him." So the Lord loves you much, and he is testing you to set whether you can bear his will,— whether you love him so much that you will take up your cross, and deny yourself, just as, sometimes, architects will ask for their work to be put to the severest possible tests. "Yes," they say, "see what it will really bear." No doubt Stephenson felt great joy when the heaviest train went safely across his tubular bridge; and other engineers have said, "Yes, put on as much pressure as you like; it will stand it." Fathers often take delight in the athletic feats of their sons, and princes revel in the brave deeds of their warriors; and so does the Lord delight to see what his people can do, and he often puts upon them more and more, to prove whether they love him so much that they can bear it all for his sake. Did not the Lord do this to let Satan see that Job did love his God, and would still say, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?... The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." We cannot tell what a blessing must come from such a state of heart as that.

It is very possible, dear friend, also, that God is putting you through all this trouble *that he may enable you to bear great prosperity.* Job was to have  
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twice as much as he had ever had before, and that was a very great deal, for he said that he washed his steps with butter, and the rock poured him out rivers of oil; but how much richer he was when everything was doubled! Job was hardly fit to manage such a large estate as that until he had been made to see the vanity of it all, and to get nearer to his God. So, dear friends, you are going to be pressed, and squeezed, and tried, in order that you may be fitted to come right out into the front rank, and to be magnified and made much of by the Lord your God. I have noticed this kind of thing happen more than once. I have seen a man suddenly taken from the very dregs of the people, and put up to preach, and he has been popular all at once. Nobody has abused him, nobody has said a word against him; but, before long, he has passed completely out of sight. He could not bear the weight that was put upon him, and gave way. You have seen others, who have been called of God to preach the Word, and they have been abused year after year. They could not say anything that was not

perverted; they were called mountebanks, impostors, and I know not what. And then, when happier days came, and almost all men spoke well of them, they could bear it, for they had learnt to despise alike the flatteries and the abuse of men. Now, something like that must happen to all God's servants who are to be greatly honored. If they are to bear prosperity, they must go through the fire first. Perhaps that is what the Lord is doing with you, my dear friend; if so, be content with your lot.

And, once again, do you not think that the Lord means thus *to make you more like his dear Son than other people are?* Some other Christians have not as much trouble to endure as you have. No; why is it? You know how an artist can, if he likes, dash off a picture. There! A little red, and a little blue, and so on, and it is done; and away it goes! Ay, but when he wants to paint something that will be observed and admired, then he takes more pains. See how he works at every part of it; note what care and what trouble he takes with it. It is the same with the lapidary or the sculptor when he has choice work in hand; and you are, I hope, the kind of material that will pay for cutting and carving; and the Lord is using his chisel upon you more than he does upon most folk. He wants to make you just like his dear Son; so now he is chipping out a thorn-crown, and you must wear it round your brain. He is fashioning the image of his Son out of the block of your renewed nature, and you must patiently bear the blows from his hammer and chisel till that work is done.

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Finally, if I cannot tell you why all this trouble falls to your lot, I know it is right, for *the Lord has done it*, and blessed be his name. Aaron held his peace when his two sons died. He got as far as that in submission to the will of the Lord; but it will be better still if, instead of simply holding your peace, you can bless and praise and magnify the Lord even in your sharpest trouble. Oh, may you be divinely helped to do so! Let every troubled soul march out of this place feeling, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." Rise, dear friend, out of all despondency and despair, shake yourself from the dust, and put on your beautiful garments of praise and joy, remembering that—

***"The path o sorrow, and that path alone,  
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown."***

You can see the tracks of the martyrs along the road you are journeying; better still, you can see the footprints of the Son of God, your Lord and Savior. Therefore, you may rest assured that you are on the right road, so press bravely forward on it, and, in due time, you will come to that place of which Job said, "There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest;" and you shall be for ever without fault before the throne of God. May he grant this happy portion to you all, for his dear Son's sake! Amen.



# THE DEATH OF THE CHRISTIAN

NO. 43

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING,  
SEPTEMBER 9, 1855,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

*“Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in his season.”- Job 5:26.*

WE do not believe all that Job’s friends said. They spoke very often as uninspired men, for we find them saying many things that are not true; and if we read the book of Job through, we might say with regard to them, “miserable comforters are ye all,” for they did not speak concerning God’s servant, Job, the thing that was right. But, nevertheless, they gave utterance to many holy and pious sentences, which are well worthy of regard, as having come from the lips of three men distinguished in their age for their learning, talent, and ability, three gray-headed sires, who from experience were able to speak what they knew. Their mistakes are not to be wondered at because they had not then that clear, bright, shining light, which we enjoy in these modern times. They had few opportunities to meet together; there were but few prophets in those days who taught them the things of the kingdom. We only marvel that without the light of the gospel revelation they were able to discover so much of the truth as they did. However I must make a remark concerning this chapter, that I cannot but

regard it as being in the man, not so much the utterance of the man-who here speaks-Eliphaz the Temanite-but the very word of God; not so much the simple saying of the unwise comforter who upbraided Job, as the speech of the great comforter who consoles his people, and who only utters the thing that is right. The opinion is justified by the fact that this chapter is quoted by the apostle Paul. Eliphaz says, in the 13th verse, "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." And we find the apostle Paul in the Corinthians, saying, "As it is written, he taketh the wise in their own

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craftiness;" thus giving sanction to this passage as having been inspired of God, at all events as being most certainly truthful. Most certainly the experience of such a man as Eliphaz is worthy of much regard and when speaking of the general condition of God's people, that they are hid from the scourge of the tongue, "that they are not afraid of destruction when it cometh," that they laugh at destruction and famine, and so on, we may accept his words as being proven by experience, and authenticated by inspiration. "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season." Here is a very beautiful comparison, the comparison of the aged Christian-for that I take it lies on the surface of the text-to a shock of corn. Go into the harvest field, and you shall see how much the wheat reminds you of the aged believer. How much anxiety has been expended on that field! When the seed first sprung up the farmer dreaded lest the worm should bite the tender shoots, and the blade should be devoured, or lest some sharp frost should consume the infant plant and cause it to wither and die. And, then, month after month, as the seasons came, how did he anxiously look towards heaven and long that the rains might come, or that the genial sunshine might pour out its vivifying floods of light upon the field. When it has come to somewhat of maturity, how greatly has he feared lest the mildew and blast should shrivel up the precious ears. It stands in the fields now, and in some respects he is freed from his anxiety. The months of his travail are over. He has waited patiently for the precious fruits of the soil, but now they are there. And so with the gray-headed man. How many years of anxiety have been expended upon him! In his youth how likely did it seem that he might be smitten down by death, and yet he has passed safely through youth, manhood, and age. What varied accidents have been warded from him! How has the shield of the Providential Keeper been over his head to keep him from the shafts of the pestilence, or from the heavy hand of accident that might have smitten his life! How many anxieties has he had himself! How many troubles has he passed through! Look upon the hoary-headed veteran! Mark the scars that troubles have inflicted upon his forehead! And see, deep written in his breast, the dark mementos of the sharp struggles and trials he has endured! And now his anxieties are somewhat over, he is come very nearly to the haven of rest. A few short years of trial and trouble shall land him on fair Canaan's coast, and we look upon him with the same pleasure that the farmer regards the wheat, because the anxiety is over and the time of rest is now approaching. Mark how weak the stem has become!

how every wind shakes it to and fro, it is withered and dried! See how the  
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head hangs down to earth, as if it were about to kiss the dust, and show whence it had its origin! So, mark you the aged man, tottering are his steps; they that look out of the windows are darkened, the grinders cease because they are few, and the grasshopper has become a burden." Yet even in that weakness there is glory. It is not the weakness of the tender blade, it is the weakness of the full ripe corn it is a weakness that shows its maturity, it is a weakness that gilds it with glory. Even as the color of the wheat is golden, so that it looks more beautiful than when the greenness of its verdure is on it, so the gray-headed man has a crown of glory on his head. He is glorious in his weakness, more than the young man in his strength, or the maiden in her beauty. Is not a shock of corn a beautiful picture of the state of man, moreover, because very soon it must be taken home? The reaper is coming. Even now I hear the sickle sharpening. The reaper hath well edged it, and he shall soon cut the corn down. See! he is coming across the field to reap his harvest; and then, by-and-bye, it shall be carried into the barn and safely housed, no more subject to blight, or mildew, or insect, or disease. There it shall be secured, where no snow can fall upon it, no winds can molest it. It shall be safe and secure; and joyful shall be the time when harvest home shall be proclaimed, and the shock of corn, fully ripe, shall be carried into the farmer's garner. Such is the aged man. He, too, shall soon be taken home. Death is even now sharpening his sickle, and the angels are getting ready their chariot of gold to bear him up to the skies. The barn is built; the house is provided; soon the great Master shall say, "Bind up the tares in bundles to burn, and gather the wheat into my barn."

This morning, we shall consider *the death of Christians in general*; not of the aged Christian merely, for we shall show you that while this text does seem to bear upon the aged Christian, in reality it speaks with a loud voice to every man who is a believer. "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season."

There are four things we shall mark in the text. First, we shall consider that death is *inevitable*, because it says, "Thou shalt come." Secondly, that death is *acceptable*, because it does not read, "I will make thee go to thy grave," but "thou shalt come there." Thirdly that death is always *timely*: "Thou shalt come to thy grave in *full age*." Fourthly, that death to the Christian is always *honorable*, for the promise declareth to him, "Thou shalt go to thy grave in full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season."

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1. The first remark, namely, that death, even to the Christian, is **INEVITABLE**, is very trite, simple and common, and we need scarcely have made it, but we found it necessary, in order to introduce one or two remarks upon it. How hacknied is the thought, that all men must die, and therefore, what can we say upon it? And yet we blush not to repeat it, for while it is a truth so well known, there is none so much forgotten, while we

all believe it in the theory and receive it in the brain, how seldom it is impressed on the heart? The sight of death makes us remember it. The tolling of the solemn bell speaks to us of it. We hear the deep-tongued voice of time as the bell tolls the hours and preaches our mortality. But very usually; forget it Death is inevitable to all. But I wish to make an observation concerning death, and that is, that while it is written, "It is appointed unto all men once to die," yet a time shall come when some Christian men shall not die at all. We know that had Adam never sinned he would not have died, for death is the punishment of sin; and we know that Enoch and Elijah were translated to heaven without dying. Therefore it does seem to follow, that death is not absolutely necessary for a Christian. And, moreover, we are told in Scripture, that there are some who shall be "alive and remain," when Jesus Christ shall come, and the apostle says, "I tell you a mystery-we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." There shall be some who shall be found living, of whom the apostle says, "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." We know that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom; but it is possible that they may be refined by some spiritual process, which shall preclude the necessity of dissolution. Oh! I have thought of that idea very much, and I have wondered whether it should not be possible that some of us might be in that happy number who shall not see death. Even if we are not, there is something very cheering in the thought: Christ did so conquer death that he not only delivers the lawful captive out of the prison, but he saves a band from the jaws of the monster, and leads them by his den unharmed! He not only resuscitates the dead, and puts new life into those that are slain by the fell scythe, but some he actually takes to heaven by a bye-road. He says to death-"Avaunt, thou monster! On these thou shalt never put thy hand! These are chosen men and women; and thy cold fingers shall never freeze the current of their soul. I am taking them straight to heaven without death. I will transport them in their bodies up to heaven without passing through thy gloomy portals, or having been captives in thy dreary land of shades."

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How glorious is the thought, that Christ has vanquished death; that some men shall not die. But you will say to me, "How can that be? for the body has mortality mingled with its very essence." We are told it is true, by eminent men, that there is a necessity in nature that there should be death, since one animal must prey upon another; and even could all animals be taught to give up their prey, they must feed upon plants, and so devour certain minute insects which had hidden thereon. Death therefore seems to be the law of nature. Be it remembered; that men have already lived far beyond the present allotted term, and it does seem most easy to conceive that the creature which can subsist a thousand years, could exceed that period. But this objection is not valid, since the saints will not live for ever in this world, but will be removed to a habitation where laws of glory shall supersede laws of nature.

**II.** And now comes a sweet thought, that death to the Christian is always ACCEPTABLE—"thou shalt *come* to thy grave," Old Caryl makes this remark on this verse—"A willingness and a cheerfulness to die. Thou shalt *come*, thou shalt not be dragged or hurried to thy grave, as it is said of the foolish rich man, Luke 12. This night shall thy soul be taken from thee. But thou shalt come to thy grave thou shalt die quietly and smilingly, as it were; thou shalt go to thy grave, as it were upon thine own feet, and rather walk than be carried to thy sepulcher." The wicked man, when he dies, is driven to his grave, but the Christian *comes* to his grave. Let me tell you a parable. Behold two men sat together in the same house when Death came to each of them. He said to one, "Thou shalt die." The man looked at him tears suffused his eyes, and tremblingly he said, "O Death, I cannot! will not die." He sought out a physician, and said to him, "I am sick, for Death hath looked upon me. His eyes have paled my cheeks, and I fear I must depart. Physician, there is my wealth, give me health and let me live." The physician took his wealth, but gave him not his health with all his skill. The man changed his physician and tried another, and thought that perhaps he might spin out the thread of life a little longer. But, alas! Death came and said, "I have given thee time to try thy varied excuses come with me; thou shalt die." And he bound him hand and foot, and made him go to that dark land of shades. As the man went he clutched at every side post by the way but Death, with iron hands, still pulled him on. There was not a tree that grew along the way but he tried to grasp it, but Death said, "Come on! thou art my captive, and thou shalt die." And unwillingly as the laggard schoolboy, who goeth slowly to school, so did he trace the road with

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Death. He did not *come* to his grave, but Death fetched him to it—the grave came to him.

But Death said to the other man, "I am come for thee." He smilingly replied, "Ah, Death! I know thee, I have seen thee many a time. I have held communion with thee. Thou art my Master's servant, thou hast come to fetch me home. Go, tell my Master I am ready, when'er he pleases. Death, I am ready to go with thee," And together they went along the road, and held sweet company. Death said to him, "I have worn these skeleton bones to frighten wicked men; but I am not frightful. I will let thee see myself. The hand that wrote upon Belshazzar's wall was terrible because no man saw anything but the hand; but," said Death. "I will show thee my whole body. Men have only seen my bony hand, and have been terrified." And as they went along, Death ungirded himself to let the Christian see his body and he smiled, for it was the body of an angel. He had wings of cherubs, and a body glorious as Gabriel. The Christian said to him, "Thou art not what I thought thou wast: I will cheerfully go with thee." At last Death touched the believer with his hand—it was even as when the mother doth in sport smite her child a moment. The child loves that loving pinch upon the arm, for it is a proof of affection. So did Death put his finger on the man's pulse, and stopped it for a moment, and the Christian found himself by

Death's kind finger changed into a spirit; yea, found himself brother to the angels; his body had been etherealized, his soul purified, and he himself was in heaven. You tell me this is only a parable; but let me give you some facts that shall back it up. I will tell you some of the death-bed savings of dying saints, and show you that, to them, Death has been an agreeable visitant, of whom they were not afraid. You will not disbelieve dying men. It were ill to act the hypocrite's part at such a time. When the play is over men will take off the mask: and so with these men when they came to die-they stood out in solemn unclothed reality.

First, let me tell you what Dr. Owen said-that celebrated prince of Calvinists. While his works are to be found, I am not afraid that men shall lack arguments to defend the Gospel of Free-grace. A friend called to tell Dr. Owen that he had put to press his "Meditations on the Glory of Christ." There was a momentary gleam in his languid eye as he answered, "I am glad to hear it. Oh!" said he, "the long wished for time has come at last, in which I shall see that glory in another manner than I have ever done, or was capable of doing in this world."

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But, you may say, this man was a mere theologian, let us hear a poet speak.

George Herbert, after some severe struggles, and having requested his wife and nieces, who were weeping in extreme anguish, to leave the room, he committed his will to Mr. Woodnott's care, crying out, "I am ready to die - Lord, forsake me not now, my strength faileth; but grant me mercy for the merits of my Lord Jesus. And now, Lord receive my soul." Then he laid himself back and breathed out his life to God. Thus the poet dies. That glorious fancy of his, that might have pictured gloomy things if it had pleased, was only shed with rapturous sight of angels. As he used to say himself, "Methinks I hear the church bells of heaven ringing." And methinks he did hear them when he came near the river Jordan.

"But," you will say, "one was a theologian, and the other a poet -it might have been all fancy." Now learn what an active man, a missionary, said - Brainard.

He said, "I am almost in eternity. I long to be there. My work is done. I have done with all my friends. All the world is now nothing to me. Oh, to be in heaven to praise and glorify God with his holy angels." That is what Brainard said. He who counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and went among wild untutored Indians to preach the gospel.

But it is possible you may say, "These were men of ages gone by." Now, you shall have men of modern times.

And first, hear what the great and eminent Scotch preacher, Haldane, said. He raised himself a little, and distinctly repeated these words "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then we shall appear with him in glory." He was then asked if he thought he was going home. He answered, "Perhaps not quite yet." Mrs. Haldane affectionately said, "Then you will not leave us very soon." He replied with a smile, "To depart and to be with Christ is

far better." On being asked if he felt much peace and happiness, he twice repeated, "Exceeding great and precious promises." He then said, "But I must rise." Mrs. Haldane said, "You are not able to get up." He smiled, and answered, "I shall be satisfied when; awake with his likeness." She said, "Is that what rising up you meant?" He replied, "Yes, that is the rising I meant. I must rise!"

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And now, what said Howard-the great philanthropist, the man who while possessing true religion, and being the most eminent and distinguished of Christians, would from his plain common sense mode of acting, never be suspected of being a fanatic and an enthusiast? A few days before his death, when the symptoms of his disease began to assume a most alarming appearance, he said to Admiral Priestman, "You endeavor to divert my mind from dwelling on death; but I entertain very different sentiments. Death has no terror for me. I always look forward to it with cheerfulness, if not with pleasure."

But perhaps you may say, "We never knew any of these people. We should like to hear of somebody whom we did know." Well, you shall hear of one whom you have heard me affectionately mention. He was not of our denomination, but he was a very prince in Israel-I refer to Joseph Irons. Many of you heard the sweet and blessed things that proceeded out of his lips, and will perhaps be able to verify what is said of him. At intervals he repeated short portions of Scripture, and select sentences, such as, "How long, Lord?" "Come, Lord Jesus!" "I long to go home to be at rest." Seeing his dear wife shedding tears, he said, "Do not weep for me; I am waiting for that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." After a pause, to recover his breath, he added, "He that has preserved me thus far, will never leave, or forsake me. Fear not: all is well. Christ is precious. I am going home, for I am a shock of corn fully ripe." Now that is a man you did know many of you. And it proves the fact that I have asserted, that to a Christian, death is acceptable come when it may. I am sure I can say, with many of my brethren here, that could I now have the greatest favor conferred on me that mortals could desire, I would ask that I might die. I never wish to have the choice given to me; but to die is the happiest thing man can have, because it is to lose anxiety, it is to slay care, it is to have the peculiar sleep of the beloved. To the Christian, then, death must be acceptable.

A Christian has nothing to lose by death. You say he has to lose his friends. I am not so sure of that. Many of you have many more friends in heaven than on earth; some Christians have more dearly beloved ones above than below. You often count your family circle, but do you do as that little girl of whom Wordsworth speaks, when she said, "Master, we are seven."

Some of them were dead and gone to heaven, but she would have it that they were all brothers and sisters still. Oh! how many brothers and sisters we have up stairs in the upper room in our Father's house; how many dear

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ones, linked with us in the ties of relationship, for they are as much our

relations now as they were then! Though in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, yet in that great world, who has said that the ties of affection shall be severed, so that we shall not even there claim kindred with one another, as well as kindred with Jesus Christ? What have we to lose by death? Come when he may, should we not open the door for him? I would love to feel like that woman who said, when she was dying, 'I feel like a door on the latch, ready to be opened to let my Lord in.' Is not that a sweet state, to have the house ready, so that it will require no setting in order? When death comes to a wicked man, he finds him moored fast, he snaps his cable, and drives his ship to sea; but when he comes to the Christian, he finds him winding up the anchor, and he says, "When thou hast done thy work and shipped the anchor, I will take thee home." With sweet breath he blows on him, and the ship is wafted gently to heaven, with no regrets for life, but with angels at the prow, spirits guiding the rudder, sweet songs coming through the cordage, and canvass silvered o'er with light.

**III.** Then thirdly, the Christian's death is always **TIMELY** - 'Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age.' "Ah!" says one, "that is not true. Good people do not live longer than others. The most pious man may die in the prime of his youth." But look at my text. It does not say, thou shalt come to thy grave in old age-but in a "full age." Well, who knows what a "full age" is? A "full age" is whenever God likes to take his children home. There are some fruits you know that are late in coming to perfection, and we do not think their flavour is good till Christmas. Or till they have gone through the frost; while some are fit for table now. All fruits do not get ripe and mellow at the same season. So with Christians. They are at a full age "when God chooses to take them home. They are at "full age" if they die at twenty one; they are not more if they live to be ninety. Some wines can be drunk very soon after the vintage. Others need to be kept. But what does this matter, if when the liquor is broached it is found to have its full flavour? God never broaches his cask till the wine has perfected itself. There are two mercies to a Christian. The first is that he will never die too soon; and the second, that he will never die too late.

First, he will never die *too soon*. Spencer, who blazed out so brilliantly some years ago, preached so wonderfully that many expected that a great light would shine steadily, and that many would be guided to heaven; but when suddenly the light was quenched in darkness, and he; as drowned

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while yet in his youth, men wept, and said, "Ah! Spencer died too soon." So it has been sung of Kirk White, the poet, who worked so laboriously at his studies. Like the eagle who finds that the arrow that smote him was winged by a feather from his own body, so was his own study the means of his death; and the poet said he died too soon. It was untrue. He did not die too soon; no Christian ever does. But say some, "How useful might they have been had they have lived." Ah! but how damaging they might have been! And were it not better to die than to do something afterwards that



would disgrace themselves, and bring disgrace to the Christian character? Were it not better for them to sleep while their work was going on, than to break it down afterwards? We have seen some sad instances of Christian men who have been very useful in God's cause, but have afterwards had sad falls, and have dishonored Christ, though they were saved and brought back at last. We could almost wish that they had died rather than lived. You don't know what might have been the career of these men who were taken away so soon. Are you quite sure they would have done so much good? Might they not have done much evil? Could we have a dream of the future, and see what they might have been, we should say, "Ah Lord! let it stop while it is well 'Let him sleep while the music playeth, there may be hideous sounds afterwards. We long not to keep awake to hear the dreary notes. The Christian dies well: he does not die too soon.

Again, the Christian never dies *too late*. That old lady there is eighty years old. She sits in a miserable room, shiveringly a handful of fire. She is kept by charity. She is poor and miserable. "What's the good of her?" says everybody: "she has lived too long. A few years ago she might have been of some use; but now look at her! She can scarcely eat unless her food is put into her mouth. She cannot move; and what good can she be?" Do not you find fault with your Master's work. He is too good a husbandman to leave his wheat in the field too long and let it shale out. Go and see her; and you will be reprov'd. Let her speak: she can tell you things you never knew in all your life. Or, if she does not speak at all, her silent un murmuring serenity, her constant submission, teaches you how to bear suffering. So that there is something you can learn from her yet. Say not the old leaf hangeth too long on the tree. An insect may yet twist itself therein, and fashion it into its habitation. O say not the old sear leaf ought to have been blown off long ago. The time is coming when it shall fall gently on the soil; but it remaineth to preach to unthinking men the frailty of their lives. Hear what God says to each of us:- "thou shalt come to thy

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grave in full age." Cholera! thou mayest fly across the land and taint the air: I shall die in a "full age." I may preach to -day, and as many days as I please in the weak, but I shall die at a full age. However ardently I may labor, I shall die at a full age. Affliction may come to drain my very life's blood, and dry up the very sap and marrow of my being. Ah; but affliction thou shalt not come too soon-I shall die at a full age. And thou waitingman! and thou tarrying woman! thou art saying, "O Lord, how long ? how long? Let me come home." Thou shalt not be kept from thy beloved Jesus one hour more than is necessary, thou shalt have heaven as soon as thou art ready for it. Heaven is ready enough for thee, and thy Lord will say, "Come up higher!" when thou hast arrived at a full age -but never before nor after.

**IV.** Now the last thing is, that a Christian will die with HONOR. Thou shalt come to thy grave like a shock of corn cometh in in his season." You hear men speak against funeral honors, and I certainly do enter my protest

against the awful extravagance with which many funerals are conducted, and the absurdly stupid fashions that are often introduced. It would be a happy thing if some persons could break through them, and if widows were not obliged to spend the money which they need so much themselves, upon a needless ceremony, which makes death not honorable, but rather despicable. But, methinks that while death should not be flaunted out with gaudy plumes, there is such a thing as an honorable funeral which every one of us may desire to have. We do not wish to be carried away just as a bundle of tares, we would prefer that devout men should carry us to the grave and make much lamentation over us. Some of us have seen funerals that were very like a 'harvest home .' I can remember the funeral of a sainted minister under whom I once sat. The pulpit was hung in black, and crowds of people came together; and when an aged veteran in the army of Christ rose up to deliver the funeral oration over his remains, there stood a weeping people lamenting that a prince had fallen that day in Israel. Then, verily, I felt what Mr. Jay must have experienced when he preached the funeral sermon for Rowland Hill, 'Howl fir tree, the cedar is fallen,' there was such a melancholy grandeur there. And yet my soul seemed lit up with joy, to think it possible that some of us might share in the same affection, and that the same tears might be wept over us when we come to die. Ah! my brethren here, my brethren in office, my brethren in this church, it may somewhat cheer your hearts to know that when you depart, your death will be to us a source of the deepest grief and most piercing sorrow. Your

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burial shall not be that prophesied for Jehoiakim—the burial of an ass, with none to weep over him; but devout men will assemble and say, 'Here lies the deacon who for years served his Master so faithfully.' 'Here lies the Sunday-school teacher 'will the child say 'who early taught me the Savior's name;' and if the minister should fall, methinks a crowd of people following him to the tomb would well give him such a funeral as a shock of corn hath when 'it cometh in in his season.' I believe we ought to pay great respect to the departed saints' bodies. 'The memory of the just is blessed.' And even ye little saints in the church, don't think you will be forgotten when you die. You may have no grave-stone; but the angels will know where you are as well without a grave-stone as with it. There will be some who will weep over you; you will not be hurried away, but will be carried with tears to your grave.

But, methinks, there are two funerals for every Christian: one, the funeral of the *body*; and the other, the *soul*. Funeral, did I say, of the soul? No, I meant not so; I meant not so; it is a marriage of the soul; for as soon as it leaves the body the angel reapers stand ready to carry it away. They may not bring a fiery chariot as erst they had for Elijah; but they have their broad spreading wings. I rejoice to believe that angels will come as convoys to the soul across the ethereal plains. Lo! angels at the head support the ascending saint, and lovingly they look upon his face as they bear him upwards; and angels at the feet, assist in wafting him up yonder through the skies, And as the husbandmen come out from their houses and

cry, "A joyous harvest home," so will the angels come forth from the gates of heaven, and say, "Harvest home I harvest home; Here is another shock of corn fully ripe gathered into the garner." I think the most honorable and glorious thing we shall ever behold, next to Christ's entrance into heaven, and his glory there, is the entrance of one of God's people into heaven. I can suppose it is made a holiday whenever a saint enters, and that is continually, so that they keep perpetual holiday. Oh! methinks there is a shout that cometh from heaven whenever a Christian enters it, louder than the noise of many waters. The thundering acclamations of a universe are drowned as if they were but a whisper in that great shout which all the ransomed raise, when they cry "Another, and yet another comes;" and the song is still swelled by increasing voices, as they chant, "Blessed husbandman, blessed husbandman, thy wheat is coming home; shocks of corn fully ripe are gathering into thy garner." Well, wait a little, beloved. In a few years more you and I shall be carried through the ether on the wings

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of angels. Methinks I die, and the angels approach. I am on the wings of cherubs. Oh, how they bear me up-how swiftly and yet how deftly. I have left mortality with all its pains. Oh, how rapid is my flight! Just now I passed the morning star. Far behind me now the planets shine. Oh, how swiftly do I fly, and how sweetly! Cherubs! what sweet flight is yours, and what kind arms are these I lean upon. And on my way ye kiss me with the kisses of love and affection. Ye call me brother. Cherubs; am I your brother? I who just now was captive in a tenement of clay-am I your brother? "Yes!" they say. Oh, hark! I hear music strangely harmonious! What sweet sounds come to my ears! I am nearing Paradise. 'Tis e'en so. Do not spirits approach with songs of joy? "Yes!" they say. And ere they can answer, behold they come-a glorious convoy! I catch a sight of them as they are holding a great review at the gates of Paradise. And, ah! there is the golden gate. I enter in; and I see my blessed Lord. I can tell you no more. All else were things unlawful for flesh to utter. My Lord! I am with thee-plunged into thee-lost in thee just as a drop is swallowed in the ocean-as one single tint is lost in the glorious rainbow! Am I lost in thee, thou glorious Jesus? And is my bliss consummated? Is the wedding-day come at last? Have I really put on the marriage garments? And am I thine? Yes! I am. There is nought else now for me. In vain your harps, ye angels. In vain all else. Leave me a little while. I will know your heaven by-and-bye. Give me some years, yea give me some ages to lean here on this sweet bosom of my Lord; give me half eternity, and let me bask myself in the sunshine of that one smile. Yes; give me this. Didst speak, Jesus? "Yes, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and now thou art mine! thou art with me." Is not this heaven? I want nought else. I tell you once again, ye blessed spirits, I will see you by-and-bye. But with my Lord I will now take my feast of loves. Oh, Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Thou art heaven! I want nought else. I am lost in thee!

Beloved, is not this to go to "the grave in full age, like as a shock of corn," fully ripe? The sooner the day shall come, the more we shall rejoice. Oh,

tardy wheels of time! speed on your flight. Oh, angels, wherefore come ye on with haggard wings? Oh! fly through the ether and outstrip the lightning's flash! Why may I not die? Why do I tarry here? Impatient heart, be quiet a little while. Thou art not fit for heaven yet, else thou wouldst not be here. Thou hast not done thy work, else thou wouldst have thy rest. Toil on a little longer; there is rest enough in the grave, Thou shalt have it there. On! on!

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*“With my scrip on my back, and my staff in my hand,*

*I'll march on in haste thro' an enemy's land.*

*Though the way may be rough it cannot be long.*

*So I'll smooth it with hope, and I'll cheer it with song.”*

My dear friends, you who are not converted, I have no time to say anything to you this morning. I wish I had. But I pray that all I have said may be yours. Poor hearts, I am sorry I cannot tell you this is yours now. I would I could preach to every one of you, and say that you all shall be in heaven. But God knoweth there are some of you that are on the road to hell, and do not suppose you will enter heaven, if you go hell's road. Nobody would expect, if he proceeded to the north, to arrive at the south. Nay. God must change thine heart. By simple trust in Jesus, if thou givest thyself up to his mercy, even though the vilest of the vile, thou shalt sing before his face. And methinks, poor sinner, thou wilt say to me, as a poor woman did last Wednesday, after I had been preaching, when I believe everybody had been crying, from the least to the greatest, and even the preacher in the pulpit. As I went down, I said to one, “Are you chaff or wheat?” And she said, “Ah! I trembled to -night, sir.” I said to another, “Well, sister, I hope we shall be in Paradise soon.” And she replied, “ You may, sir.” And I came to another, and said, “Well, do you think you will be gathered with the wheat?” And she answered, “One thing I can say -if God ever lets me get into heaven I will praise him with all my might. I will sing myself away and shall never think I can sing loud enough.” It reminded me of what an old disciple once said; If the Lord Jesus does but save me he shall never hear the last of it.” Let us praise God, then, eternally-

*“While life, or thought, or being lasts,*

*Or immortality endures!”*

Now may the Three-One God dismiss you with his blessing.

# “SO IT IS.”

NO. 2175

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY,  
NOVEMBER 30TH, 1890,

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

ON LORD’S -DAY EVENING, OCT. 12TH, 1890.

*‘Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good.’  
— Job 5:27.*

THUS closed a forcible speech by Eliphaz the Temanite: it may be called his “summing up.” He virtually says, “What I have testified in the name of my friends is no dream of theirs. Upon this matter we are specialists; and bear witness to truth which we have made the subject of research and experience. Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good.” By this declaration he sets forth his teaching with authority, and presses it home. He persuades Job to consider what he had said, for it was no hasty opinion, but the ripe fruit of experience. When we speak what we know we expect to be heard.

I shall not follow Eliphaz: I am only going to borrow his closing words, and use them in reference to gospel testimony; which is to us a thing known and searched out. I shall use it in the following way. First, our text sets forth *the qualification of the teacher*. He must be a man who can say, ‘Lo this, we have searched it, so it is.’

Secondly, we have *the argument with the hearers*; — ‘We have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good.’ And lastly, we have here *the exhortation for every enquirer* who wants to know the truth

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concerning spiritual and eternal things: ‘Hear it, and know thou it for thy good.’

**I.** To begin with, I judge that these words may well Describe THE QUALIFICATION OF THE TEACHER. He will be poorly furnished if he cannot run in the line which Eliphaz draws in the words of our text.

*He should have, first, an intimate knowledge of his subject.* How can he teach what he does not know? When we come to talk about God, and the soul, and sin, and the precious blood of Jesus, and the new birth, and holiness and eternal life, the speaker who knows nothing about these things personally must be a poor driveller. Let him be quiet till he knows what he is to speak upon. Let him sweep chimneys, or cobble shoes, or break stones, or follow any other honorable calling, but it will not be honest for him to profess to be a preacher of the gospel unless he is acquainted with these sacred subjects. I know well the place of the ministry of one who was ordained to be a preacher, and drew the hire of which every true laborer is worthy. He delivered a discourse which greatly troubled the mind of a friend named Jonathan, whom I knew and esteemed. The awakened young man went to him on the Monday, and said, “Oh, sir, your sermon last Sabbath-day has robbed me of my sleep, and made me very anxious.” The preacher answered, “I am very sorry for it, Jonathan. I will never preach that sermon any more. If it troubles people, I will have no more of it; for I have something better to do than to make people miserable.” “But, sir,” said the young man, “you preached about the new birth, and you said we must be born again. In fact your text said so. What does it mean?” He answered, “Jonathan, I do not know anything about it; but you are such a good fellow that I am quite sure you need not be afraid. If there is anything in being born again you had it when you were christened. In your baptism, you were made a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

That is all I know about it.” It is needful that we say to some preachers, first of all — Ye must be born again, for, if not, you cannot interpret the new birth to the people. Without personal experience you will speak riddles of which you do not know the answers. The blind will lead the blind, and both will fall into the ditch. There is a German story of a minister who had delivered himself very earnestly upon a vital theme, and after the service he was waited upon by one in great distress of heart, who was peculiar in his use of language. He generally said “we” when he should have said ‘I’; and so he said to the minister, “Sir, if what you have been saying is true, *what shall we do?*” He did not mean to bring the minister into it, but the use of

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the word “we” implicated the pastor so much that he began to search, and, searching, he found that he had no part nor lot in the matter, and that he had been preaching what he himself had never felt. Have I anybody here who is doing this every Sabbath-day? A blind man, who is teaching others about color and vision? A preacher of an unknown God? A dead man sent with messages of life? You are in a strange position, dear friend. The Lord save you! I wish that it might happen to you as it did to my dear friend, Mr. Haslam, whom God has blessed to the conversion of so many. He was preaching a sermon which he did not understand, and while he preached it, he converted himself. By God’s grace he began to feel the power of the Holy Spirit and the force of divine truth. He so spake that a Methodist in the congregation presently cried out, “The parson is converted;” and so the parson was. He owned it, and praised God for it, and all the people sang — ***‘Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.’***

His own utterances concerning Christ crucified had been to him the power of God unto salvation. O beloved, no man has any right to teach in the Sunday-school, or preach, or pretend in any other way to be sent of God, unless he has been so taught of the Holy Spirit that he has an intimate acquaintance with the gospel.

I must add that *he should have a personal experience of it*, so that he can say, “Lo this, we have searched it, so it is.” It is unseemly that an ignorant man should keep a school. It is not meet that a dumb man should teach singing. Shall an impenitent man preach repentance? Shall an unbelieving man preach faith? Shall an unholy man preach obedience to the divine will? Shall one that is living in sin preach of freedom from sin? Surely any person will be an unsuitable herald of the glad tidings of grace who speaks what he has never tried and verified. Before thou preach again, brother, pray God to enable thee to know in thine own soul, the truth of that which thou dost declare. Oh, that we may be born again, and so preach regeneration! Oh, that we may exercise faith, and then preach it! Surely it must be so. He who would learn to plough, must not be apprenticed to one who never turned a furrow. We must know the Lord or we cannot teach his way. It strikes me, next, that *what is wanted in a successful teacher is a firm conviction of the truth of these things, growing out of his having tested them for himself*. He must say, with emphasis, “So it is.” When I had found Christ, and joined the church, I began to teach in the Sabbath-school, but

my little class of boys taught me more than I taught them. I was speaking  
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to them one day about "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," and one of the boys said to me, "Teacher, have you believed?" I answered, "Yes." "And have you been baptized?" "Yes." "Then," said he, "teacher, you are saved." I said, "I hope so." Years ago it was a kind of fashion to say "I hope so;" and I followed my seniors in this modest talk. The boy looked me straight in the face, and said, "And don't you know, teacher?" Well, I felt that I did know, and that I ought not to have said "I hope so." So I replied, "Yes, I do know it." "Of course," said the boy, "the text says so. If it ain't true, well, of course, it ain't true; but if it is true, well, it is true, and nobody need hope about it." So it was. The boy used good logic. The Scripture saith, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"; therefore, he that believeth and is baptized is saved. That is clear enough, and let not the believer say that "he hopes so," but let him boldly assert that "it is so." You promise a man to pay him five pounds some day this week. Suppose you asked him, "Do you expect that I shall pay you that five pounds?" If he should answer, "I hope so," you would know what he thought of you. And it is very much the same when we thus speak of the Lord: we dishonor him when we say "I hope so," after he has said "it is so." The Lord's Word must be true. Why do you "hope" about it? Believe it and enjoy it. But people will go hoping and hoping, and hopping and limping; as if to be lame were the proper thing. They had better put both feet to the ground, and cry, "God has said it: I believe it. Glory be to his name, he shall have all the praise." "Then shall the lame man leap as an hart." When we teach others, we ought to have a firm conviction that what we teach is true beyond all question. You cannot use a lever if you have no fixed fulcrum. You must have a point to work upon, or you cannot lift an ounce. So, in trying to teach another man, you must know that something or other is true. Infallibility used to be claimed for the pope, but Luther upset that nonsense. The Protestants then asserted that infallibility lay in the Bible; and this became their fulcrum. It seems to me that now it is commonly thought that infallibility lies nowhere; or, if there be any such thing, it is to be found among young green-horns, fresh from college, who do not know *A* from *B* in theology, and yet criticize the Bible, and cut it about as they choose. They are infallibles, and we must all bow down before their idol of advanced thought. I prefer my infallible Book, and I shall stick to it, God helping me, knowing that it has never led me astray, and believing that it never will. O dear teachers, know for a certainty what you teach, and, if you do not know it to be true, hold your tongues about it. If you are not sure that your doctrine is true, be quiet till you are sure. A  
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ministry of hesitation must be ruinous to souls. When divine truth is held fast, then let it be held forth, and not till then.

Once more: *a needful qualification for a teacher of the Lord is earnestness and good will to the hearer.* We must implore each one of our hearers to give earnest heed. We must cry to him with our whole heart,



‘Hear it, and know thou it for thy good.’ Without love, there can be no real eloquence. We must have a burning love for the souls of men, if we would win them for Jesus. Unless our hearts desire their good, we may preach our tongues out, but we shall never bring our hearers to salvation by Christ. The best birdlime for these wild fowl is a longing desire for their present and eternal good. The great Savior’s heart is love, and those who are to be saviours for him must be of a loving spirit. True love will do the work when everything else has failed. A pastor has held the hearer by his heart long after his head has struggled away. A preacher had managed somehow to offend one of his hearers, and the angry man kept away from the place of worship for many a day. The preacher was not in the least aware that he had given offense; but when the matter came out, he went at once to set it right. The offended person had become settled in unbelief. The preacher went to him, and said that he had been sorry to miss him; and that he had been made ill by learning that he had become an unbeliever. Tears were in his eyes, and his voice was half choked, as he said, ‘Do you know, friend David, I cannot sleep at nights for thinking about you. I am so concerned about your soul that I cannot rest unless you are converted.’ The man had grown into the habit of blasphemy, and if he had been addressed in any other way he would have cursed the minister, and told him to go about his business; but that touch of real affection did it. ‘You concerned about my soul! Then it is time that I became concerned about it too’: that was the reasoning which passed through David’s mind. Oh, do let us love our hearers! Let us love them to Jesus. These are the bands that draw men to Jesus — the bands of love; and these are the cords that hold them to the Savior — the cords of a man. We must wish our people to hear the truth, not because we have prepared discourses which we cannot afford to waste upon an empty chapel, but because we feel sure that if they will hear the gospel it will do them good, and save their souls. We must sigh and cry for the souls of our hearers. We must preach with an intent, and that intent must not fall short of their eternal salvation. We must go as with a sword in our bones till we see our hearers yield their hearts to Jesus.

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Knowledge of our subject avails not without love to our hearers. There are three ways of knowing, but only one sort is truly worth the having. Many labor *to know, merely that they may know*. These are like misers, who gather gold that they may count it, and hide it away in holes and corners. This is the avarice of knowledge; in some respects less mean than greed of gold, and yet of the same order of vices. Selfishness makes men anxious to know; mental selfishness urges them to toils most wearisome. Yet there may be much of this hoarded knowledge where there is no wisdom. Poor is the ambition to know — to know more than others, to know more to-day than we knew yesterday; to know what no one else knows. What of all this? To know, to know; this is the one thing with those who, like the horseleech, live only to suck and to be swollen. To what purpose is knowledge buried in the brain, like a crock of gold buried in a ditch? Such knowledge turns stagnant, like water shut up in a close pond — above

mantled with rank weed, and below putrid, or full of loathsome life. A second class aspire *to know that others may know that they know*. To be reputed wise is the heaven of most mortals. To win a degree, and wear half-a-dozen letters of the alphabet at the end of your name, is the glory and immortality of many. To me the fashion seems cumbersome, and vexatious; but the grand use of these appended letters is to let the world know that this is a man who knows more than the average of his fellows. After all, it is no very great thing to make your neighbors aware that you are somebody in scientific circles; it is more magnanimous to do without the certificates, and let folks find out for themselves that you possess unusual information. One does not eat merely that others may know that you have had your dinner, and one should not know merely to have it known that you know. Why not wear letters after your name to signify that you own half a million of money, or farm a thousand acres of land, or fatten a hundred hogs? This is the grand end of wearisome days and nights, that the knowing ones may know that you know.

The third kind of knowledge is the one worth having. *Learn to know that you may make other people know*. This is not the avarice but the commerce of knowledge. Acquire knowledge that you may distribute it. Light the candle, but put it not under a bushel. Some are much buried under that bushel. My friend was half inclined to say a word or two for his Lord; but he did not, for he recollected the big bushel marked "T IMIDITY & Co.," and so he kept his light out of the way. Destroy that bushel, since it destroys your usefulness. If God has given you a candle, let it burn and shine; for

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light is given that eyes may see it. If God has lighted you from on high, do not-deny your light to any far or near. Know that others may know. Be taught that you may teach. This trading is gainful to all who engage in it. Thus much upon the first point: the qualification of a teacher is intimate knowledge, personal experience, confidence, earnestness and good will.

**II.** Secondly, THE ARGUMENT FOR THE HEARER: — "Lo this, we have searched it, so it is."

The argument directed to the hearer is the experience of many, confirming the statement of one: — "We have searched it, so it is." Bacon has taught us from a mass of agreeing testimonies to infer a general truth. We are not now so foolish as to set up a theory, and then hunt for facts to support it; but we gather the facts first, and then deduce the theory from them. So here the three friends have made ample researches, and have arrived at certain conclusions; and they urge this reasoning upon Job. Unrenewed men cannot know much about Christ and his salvation except it be through the testimonies of their friends who have felt the power of divine grace: it is ours therefore to be witnesses for Christ to them, that they also may believe the truth, which can save their souls.

Without further preface I should like to bear my own personal witness to a few things about which I am fully persuaded. I am not afraid of dogmatism, but I shall speak very positively, since I can say, "Lo this, we have

searched it, so it is.”

And my first witness is that *sin is an evil and a bitter thing*. I think, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I may speak for you and say, “We have searched this out, and we know that it is so.” We have seen sin prove injurious to our fellow-men. “Who hath woe, who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine. Men of strength to mingle strong drink.” Whence cometh much of beggary but from dissipation? Whence cometh much of deadly disease but from uncleanness of life? Is not half the misery in the world the direct and distinct result of vice? I will not harrow up your feelings by telling you of young men and young women who bade fair for better things, but who turned aside to vice, and thus brought evil diseases into their bones. We could wish to forget their cries and moans with which they appalled us when they found that wild oats had to be reaped, and that each ear of those sheaves was as a flake of fire. By-and-by the guilty soul has to meet its God; what will be its terror! We know of ourselves, and in

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ourselves, that sin is a serpent, whose tooth infuses poison into the wound it makes. Sin brought some of us very low, and nothing but almighty grace restored us. It made some of us sit between the jaws of despair, and question whether it would not be better to put an end to our lives than continue to exist in such horrible gloom. Sin is that inquisition which deals in racks and fires, and all manner of infernal tortures. No misery can for a moment be compared with the torment which follows upon sin. We get neither pleasure nor profit by sin, though it may dupe us with the name of both. Sin is ‘evil, only evil, and that continually.’ This we have searched, and *so it is*. We wish that others who are beginning life would accept our testimony, and withhold their feet from the paths of the destroyer. It cannot be needful that everybody should taste the poison cup: may not our mournful experience of sin’s evil effects suffice for you? Sirs, you may search the purlieu of sin, from end to end, but you will never find a living joy therein. Wherefore, flee from it by God’s grace.

I wish next to testify to the fact that *repentance of sin, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, bring a wonderful rest to the heart, and work a marvellous change in the whole life and character*. There is such a thing as the new birth, for we have been born again; and this not in mere fancy or sentiment, but as a plain matter of fact. We know what it is to have passed from death unto life, as surely as we know the difference between night and morning. Young man, have you any doubt about this? Will my testimony be of any avail to you? Do you think I would stand here, knowingly, and tell you what is false? I hope you do me justice, and admit that I aim at speaking the truth. There is such a thing as having the tastes all altered, the desires all changed, the fears removed, the hopes elevated, the passions subdued, the will conquered, the affections purified, and the mind sanctified. There is such a thing as having perfect rest about all the past, because sin is forgiven; perfect rest about the future, because we have committed our all to the hands of Christ, who is able to keep us; and peace as to the present, because we belong to Jesus. I speak for thousands in this

place to-night when I say that repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ bestow on men a wonderful delight, and transform their characters by the Holy Ghost. That is worth knowing, is it not? Believe for yourselves, and realize personally the power of faith. "We have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good."

Next, we beg to bear our witness to the fact that *prayer is heard of God*. If it were possible for me to tell you the many instances in which God has

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heard my prayers, you would, in your kindness, follow me a considerable way, but I should have to draw so largely upon your faith, that before I came to the end, you would feel compelled to doubt. Nor should I blame you. Truth is stranger than fiction, and if you are not familiar with prayer, you will think me a mad fanatic. In matters in reference to the Stockwell Orphanage, I have seen the Lord's hand very conspicuously in times of need. When money has run short, and there have been hundreds of children to be fed, faith and prayer have filled our coffers. Well, sirs, men of the world may say it is all fancy, and laugh at it as a spiritual dream; but fancies do not load tables, and feed children, and supply thousands of pounds. Will one of you make the attempt? Will you provide for our five hundred orphans for a month by dreams and fancies? We have known times of close pinching, and have waited upon God, and in a short time he has sent us abundant relief, whereof there are brethren on this platform who would willingly bear witness. If there be no prayer-hearing God, we have played the fool; and yet no other sort of foolery has ever produced such surprising results. We know that God hears prayer. We are personally sure of it, because we have tried it for ourselves. I wish that anybody here who is in doubt about it would try the power of prayer. Go to God in prayer — ay, even you that are unconverted — and see whether the Lord will not hear you. Somebody says, "Surely that is unsound advice! How can the unconverted pray?" Let me tell you a story. I was preaching, years ago, to the Sunday-school children of a certain country town, where the people were Calvinistic, and a point or two more. They received sixteen ounces to the pound of the gospel, and they liked an ounce or two above full weight. I made the observation to the children that before I had been renewed by grace, I, as a child, was in trouble, and I went to God in supplication, and he helped me. I need not repeat the circumstances; but it seemed to me that the Lord heard my childish pleading, and helped me. This experience led me to feel that there was a reality in prayer; for God had heard me. When I came out from the chapel, where I had mentioned this circumstance, a number of grave persons who were both sound and sour in the faith, beset me round about like bees. They began asking, "How can a natural man pray a spiritual prayer? How can God accept a prayer which is merely natural, since he is a Spirit? If prayer is not wrought by the Holy Ghost it is an idle form"; and so on, and so on. It is difficult to conceive how many quibbles can be made upon one point. I was about twenty years of age, but I did my best to defend myself, for I had stated a fact, and a fact is a stubborn thing. At any rate, I held my own; but I do not know that I should

have won the victory if I had been left alone. A grand old woman in a red cloak pressed forward into the middle of the ring, and addressed the doubly-sound brethren, whom she knew better than I did. With an almost prophetic air she looked on them and said, ‘O fools and slow of heart to come here and cavil with this young servant of the Lord. Hearken to me, and be convinced, and go home in silence. Does not the Lord hear the young ravens when they cry? Do they pray spiritual prayers? Does the Holy Ghost work prayer in them? If God hears the natural prayers of crying ravens, will he not hear the cries of children?’ This was fine. The adversaries vanished out of my sight. There was no overcoming a statement so Scriptural. God does hear prayer. We bear our witness to that fact with all our strength, and therefore we say about it: ‘Lo this, we have searched it, so it is hear it, and know thou it for thy good.’

Another testimony we would like to bear, namely, that *obedience to the Lord, though it may involve prevent loss, is sure to be the most profitable course for the believing man to take*. If you will serve the Lord Jesus Christ, you will not find your road all smooth; but you will find it more pleasant than serving the devil. Satan said of Job, ‘Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about all that he hath?’ It was most true, but the Lord God might have answered the devil, ‘Would you have my servants unrewarded? It is from you that service meets no reward but death. Do you think I would have you able to say, ‘God’s servants serve him for nothing. Even Job gets no return for his faithful obedience?’ Beloved, we may not expect immediate success in business because we walk in the path of integrity. We may for a time be losers by being honest, and may miss many a chance by abhorring deception. But we do not measure things by the inch, and by the ounce, when we come to deal with eternal matters. Brethren, here we leave the clock and its ticking, and speak of the glory and immortality which belong to the infinite and the eternal. Coming into those larger regions, we declare that nothing can be obtained, worth the getting, by a lie, or by a trick, or by falling into sin. The most profitable course in life that any man can take is to do the right in every case. If it should involve loss, do right, and suffer the consequences; for there are other compensating consequences which will make a man a gainer by uprightness, even if he should lose the clothes from his back. To have done right is to have a well-spring of joy within the heart. Some of us have tried this, and are sure about it. There are aged persons here, who can tell you that they owe everything in life to having

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been enabled by the grace of God to act uprightly in their youth. I know one who is at this moment in a fine position, whose rise in life dates from the moment when his employer bade him say that he was not at home, and he answered, ‘Sir, I could not say *that*. I cannot tell a lie.’ From that day his promotion in the office was constant and rapid. Another felt himself unable to cast up the firm’s accounts on Sunday, but before long was so prized that nobody would have suggested such a thing to him. A

straightforward course is the nearest way to success. We bear our testimony that righteousness is the best course. We cannot say, "Honesty is the best policy; we have tried both that and thieving, and honesty pays best"; but, for all that, if you consider the law of the Lord you will be considering your own interests. Take notice of this testimony: righteousness is wisdom. A straight line is the shortest way between any two places. "Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good."

I have many things to say, but our hours fly like the cherubim: each one hath six wings. We beg to say that *the old-fashioned gospel is able to save men, and to arouse enthusiasm in their souls*. Here — here is the best proof! Look around upon this vast assembly. Have we any music, any candles, any millinery? Have we anything here to attract people but simply the preaching of the old, old gospel? Our service is so severely simple as to be called bare. Have I varied from the old way and the old faith — ay, by the eighth part of a hair's breadth? Have I not kept to the gospel, and set it forth in simple language? Lo, here I come to the end of thirty-seven years, and before me are the same multitudes of people as at the first. Young preacher, you will not need anything but Christ Jesus should you be spared to preach as long as I have done. When everybody seems to say that orthodoxy is spun out, God will send us a revival, and the despised doctrines of grace will be to the front again, and Christ shall make them his chariot, in which he will ride forth conquering, and to conquer. Behold, even at this day, a company of the poorest of the people proclaim the gospel in its roughest form, and preach it in our streets and lanes; and the crowd is stirred therewith, as it never is by any other theme.

Notwithstanding all the infidelity of the times, faith is lifting the standard still. Hold to the faith and to the cross! Preach sin down: preach Christ up. Preach the atoning sacrifice, preach in the power of the Holy Spirit. Such preaching is sufficient for the purposes of salvation. "Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good."

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**III.** I close now with our third point: we have **HERE THE EXHORTATION TO THE ENQUIRER**. What do we say to him? "This, we have searched it, so it is; *hear it*." I need hardly address that exhortation to most of the present assembly. Hear it you do, with a delight which is remarkable. But you know how matters tend in London in these sad days. The masses of the people will not come to hear of Jesus and his love. They often pass by a street-preacher, and have no curiosity to know what it is which has brought him out into the open-air. But oh, if you wish to be saved, hear the gospel! Let nothing keep you away from God's sanctuary, where the real gospel is proclaimed. Hear it! If it is not preached exactly in the style which you would prefer, nevertheless, hear it. "Faith cometh by hearing." Come out on Sunday morning, you working-men that are sitting at home in your shirt-sleeves. Come out and hear. I cannot make out what some of you do: you work hard all the week round, and when the day of rest arrives, you

have no hope of heaven, and no hunger after salvation. Life is a poor thing if it ends here. Do you believe that all you can possess is to be had on this side the grave? It is a poor look-out. Do you fancy that your life can be nothing better than an endless turning of the grindstone? Were you born merely to toil for daily bread? Is there nothing higher and better? If you say that you will die like dogs, I dare not think so meanly of you as you think of yourselves. You have only begun to exist. You have to live for ever. You will exist in eternity as surely as God shall live, world without end. Shall it be an immortality of happiness, or an eternal existence of woe? Do, I pray you, think about this; and if there be a gospel (and you believe there is), then hear it, hear it, hear it, till by the hearing of it God sends you faith, and faith grasps salvation!

The next thing that he says is “*know it.*” Hear it and know it; go on hearing it until you know it. If you cannot quite attain to knowing it by hearing it, read your Bibles and seek the Lord till you are made to know the sublime secret. Ask Christian men and women to explain difficulties to you that so you may know it. By getting a clear view of the plan of salvation, know what you must do to be saved. If you do not know anything else, know this essential matter. Christ crucified is the most precious piece of knowing which you can ever come at. To know Christ is life eternal. Look to him till you see in him your life, your love, your God, your heaven, your all. Blessed is the man that findeth this wisdom, for he hath found an endless blessedness.

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Our text means — *know it in a particular way.* “Know thou it *for thy good.*” The devil knows a great deal. He knows more than the most intelligent of us; but he knows nothing for his good. All that he knows sours into evil within his rebellious nature. There is a way of knowing a great deal, and yet of getting no good out of it; like Samson’s lion, which had a mass of honey within it, and yet had never tasted the sweetness of it, for it was a dead lion. You may have all the knowledge of Solomon, and yet you may know nothing for your good, but end your days with the terrible wailing, “Vanity of vanities; all is vanity.”

How is a man to know anything for his good? This knowledge must first be *a practical knowledge.* Does the Word say ‘Repent’? If you want to know what repentance means, repent at once. You need not go to the Catechism or to the Creed for a definition; repent, and you know what repentance means. Be changed in mind, confess your sin, and forsake it. Be sorry for sin; see the wrong of it; quit it. You will know what repentance is when you have repented. If you want to know what faith is, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and when you have believed, you will know what believing is. The best way to know a virtue is to practice it. Somebody said, “What is the best way to tell a sinner the way of salvation?” The answer given was, “The best way to tell him is to tell him.” So it is. The very best way to eat your dinner is to eat it. We get confounding and confusing ourselves with trivial distinctions, whereas we had better throw distinctions to the dogs, and get to soul-winning. You will never catch hares with drums, nor souls

with controversies. Come to Jesus, sinner! Come to Jesus! Believe in Jesus, sinner! believe in Jesus at once! "He that doeth his will shall know of his doctrine." You will know the truth when from the heart you have obeyed it. God help you to exercise this practical faith at once. "know thou it for thy good."

To know a thing for our good is to know it *for ourselves*. "Know it for thy good." I find that one rendering is, "Know it for thyself." Another man's God is no God to me: he must be "My Lord and my God." Another man's Christ is no Christ for you; he must reveal himself to you personally. Another man's faith is no faith for you. God must be your God, Christ must be your Christ, and the faith that saves you must be your own faith. God grant that it may be so; then you will know the Lord personally for your good.

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I must add that we only know things for our good when we *know them believingly*. To a sinner a promise is as dark as a threatening, if he does not believe it. Christ, to an unbelieving sinner, is simply a judge. Christ's very death becomes "a savor of death unto death" to the unbeliever, and it cannot be "a savor of life unto life" to him unless it be mixed with faith. When you believe in Jesus, there is a vein of grace for you in every doctrine of the Bible. You know the promise of the Lord, and you know it for your good, when you humbly believe that it is so, and humbly take it to yourself because you are resting in Christ.

I would to God that many here would know these things for their good! If they did, I should be happy indeed, and so would they be.

Now I have done; but I should like to say this: If there is nothing in religion, why do you come here? If there is salvation in believing in Christ, why are you not saved? You say there is a hell. Why are you going there? You know that there is a heaven. Why are you not preparing for it? You know that there is a Christ, whose wounds bleed salvation; why are you not looking to him? Is it all to be play, this religion of ours — going to meetings, sitting in your seats, and listening to the preacher? I would rather be silent than be fiddling to your dancing; or go through the service merely to spend a Sabbath in a decorous manner. Sirs, if you are not saved what shall I do? What shall I do? If you are saved, we will meet in heaven, and we will praise God for ever, each one of us, and our Lord shall have all the glory. But if you are lost — if you are lost — I cannot come to you, nor can you come to me. Let me do what I can for you before the great gulf divides us. What, what shall I say when I render in my account? Shall I tell the Lord that you were not saved because I was afraid to tell you that there was a hell, and I kept back every threatening doctrine, and tried to make things pleasant to you, whether you were saved or not? I could not make that profession, even if it could save your souls; for it would not be in any measure true. "I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God," as far as I know it. God is my witness, and so are your consciences, that I have longed for your conversion. You that have heard me these years, if you are lost, it will not be for want of pleading with, nor



for want of instruction, nor from lack of entreaties. O souls, why will you die? Why will you keep on procrastinating, and crying "To -morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow"? Why should it always be to -morrow? There will be no to-morrow of hope for you when once you are lost. Flee now to Christ. I pray you, by the living God, and by the heaven which he gives to

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those who believe in Christ, hasten to Jesus! Trust yourselves to Jesus now. By that dreadful doom which will surely fall on every man who dies rejecting Christ, I beseech you flee from the wrath to come. Lord, grant that it may be so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Job 5.**

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"**

**— 245, 23 (VERS. III.), 757.**

## **LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.**

The following note from Mr. Spurgeon was read at the Tabernacle last Lord's -day. The publishers feel sure that sermon-readers everywhere will pray for the speedy recovery of the suffering preacher: —

'DEAR FRIENDS, — I have been in great pain day and night all this week. I earnestly entreat your prayers, for I am brought very low. Yours ever heartily,

**'C. H. S. SPURGEON.**

'Menton, November 20, 1890.'

## **CONCEALING THE WORDS OF GOD.**

NO. 1471

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 27TH, 1879,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*(On behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society.)*

***'I have not concealed the words of the Holy One.'* -Job 6:10.**

JOB'S dire distress was aggravated by the remarks of his friends. Eliphaz the Temanite opened fire against him in such words as these: 'Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled.' As much as to say, you can preach but you cannot practice. Where now your sermons and advises to others? It was a shameful thing thus to throw in the good man's teeth his testimonies in former days; but Job, who under all his sorrow always retained his clearness of intellect and singular shrewdness, took the words of Eliphaz and used them for his own comfort. They were bread and meat to him, though brought in a raven's mouth. 'Yes,' says he, 'I have comforted many, and my words have instructed the ignorant and strengthened the feeble, and this is so much my comfort in the hour of my affliction that I dare even ask God to let loose his hand upon me and end my life. Let him not spare me, for I have the testimony of my conscience that I have not been disloyal to my God. The taunt of my accuser proves that I have not concealed the words of the Holy One.' It is always well to be able thus to turn the enemy's guns upon himself, and to extract comfort from that which was meant to grieve us.

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Job made no idle boast when he said that he had not concealed the words of the Holy One, for we know from his history that he had been a bold confessor of the truth of God. We are informed that he was carefully watchful as to his own family that the words of the Holy One should be there esteemed and known, especially that grandest of all holy words concerning sacrifice and atonement: for we read that when his children had kept birthdays at each other's houses and had fulfilled their days of feasting, 'Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, it may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.' He was earnest for the purity of his family and the keeping up of the sacrifices, which were typical of the cleansing of sin; and thus he made known to his descendants the central word of all the

words of the Holy One. Even in the time of his affliction the patriarch had not spoken other than according to the mind of God. What said he when he had lost all his possessions, and was left without a child? "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; and blessed be the name of the Lord." And when his wife, seeing him covered with a loathsome disease, bade him curse God and die, he did not withhold his testimony from her, but said, "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" These were words given him of the Lord in the moment of his need, and he shunned not to utter them with all his heart. The inspired testimony about, this holy man is that "in all this did not Job sin with his lips."

It is clear that in his prosperity Job was a most faithful witness for God. We will not speculate about the time or the place in which he lived; but wherever he lived he was a man of great influence, and was held in high esteem. He says, "When I went out to the gate through the city, when I prepared my seat in the street, the young men saw me, and hid themselves: and the aged arose, and stood up. The princes refrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth." This influence was always exerted for the cause of truth and righteousness, which is always the cause of God. In the twenty-ninth chapter he says of himself, "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem." He was thus by his  
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conduct a perpetual protest against sin, a continued proclamation of justice, righteousness, mercy, and love, in the age in which he lived; and he could, therefore, say without any word of egotism, "I have not concealed the words of the Holy One." This was now a comfort to him when all other comforts failed: he knew that his affliction was not the fruit of a treacherous departure from God, or a cowardly concealment of his faith. He felt that he could face death, and even long for it, because he had been loyal to his God, and faithful to the light which had been vouchsafed him from on high. It was not self-righteousness which led Job to speak thus, but only such a use of the sure evidences of grace as would be natural and proper in any godly man in the hour of his extremity. It is the nature of obedience to yield peace to the heart, and no one can be blamed for enjoying that peace. It cannot be wrong for our consciences to bear testimony to the sincerity and purity of our lives, nor wrong that when our hearts condemn us not we have confidence towards God. He who is most undivided in his faith in Jesus may, nevertheless, derive comfort from having been enabled to be loyal to his God. Did not Paul bless God for much the same faithfulness as Job claimed when he said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith"? Happy shall he be who has a clear testimony within his soul that he has declared the truth of God in all honesty and earnestness, even to the end.

Job had not refrained from an *open confession* of his own faith in God: he had been known in the gates of the city as a worshipper of the Lord, a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil. He had never hidden his faith, but had owned one God whom he here calls the Holy *One*. While gods many and lords many divided the fealty of nations, Job was true to the one only God; and believed his words as they were revealed to him. Nor was he content with an open confession of his own faith, Job had made a continued *communication* of what he knew to others. He had taught his family, there all teaching should begin. He had taught his fellow-citizens, by his example the most powerful of all teaching. Never had he wandered into idolatry, or worshipped the sun when it shined, or kissed his hand to the queen of heaven; but, on the contrary, he had avowed the one and only Lord without fear. He asks, "Did I fear a great multitude, or did the contempt of families terrify me that I kept silence?" So faithful had he been that he cries, "Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity." This was high ground to take, but it evidently strengthened the good man's heart to bear his troubles, and

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it will do the same for us if we can win the same witness from our consciences.

Now, brethren, this is a comfort we ought to seek after. It should be our care that when we come to die, we may not have to cry, "I was ashamed of Jesus, and now I shall find him ashamed of me: I hid his truth in unrighteousness, wrapping my talent in a napkin; what shall I do, or whither shall I turn? A servant unfaithful to his trust, I have to give an account of my stewardship, and I cannot do it! Woe is me!" God grant that we may be able to say with Job, "I have not concealed the words of the Holy One." Many professors will need greatly to alter their ways, or they will be covered with confusion in the day of the Lord. Blessed and holy is he who can declare with David, or rather with David's son, "I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness, and thy truth from the great congregation." (Psalm 40:10).

We have more of the words of the Holy One than Job had, and should therefore be the more anxious to make them known. I suppose he had no inspired book to read: he could not have had any more than the Books of Moses, probably he had not those; but the Lord spoke to him as he often spoke to the prophets in the olden time, and he had also learned those truths which had been handed down from the earliest days from father to son. Now we have a vast mass of sacred literature, and we have besides that the Word himself, who is the hope of our souls and the Lord of our hearts. O brethren, if we wickedly hide what God has revealed to us we shall be veiling a great light, and we shall heap up guilt like the hills. When we come to die we shall feel a misery proportionate to the enormity of our crime; we shall be tortured with agonizing thoughts for having, as far as we were able, quenched the Spirit and blotted out the testimony of the Most High. God forbid that we should be guilty of such an enormity.

Job, according to the language of our text, evidently had a great reverence for every word of the Lord. He would not have used that term, "the Holy One," if he had not felt the holiness of the words themselves, and if he had not stood in solemn awe of him who spoke of them. He felt that they must not be concealed, because the words of the Holy One should have free course, and be published abroad. Should not the word of a king be circulated through the length and breadth of his dominions? Have you and I such a reverence for every revealed truth? Do we stand in awe of every

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word of God? If we do it will be well for us if we practically express our homage after the fashion of David, who said, "With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth." The words which God speaks are uttered that *we* may speak them. It is the best homage to a word to hear it and to repeat it. Let us proclaim God's words abroad: they are light and are not meant to be hidden. Such candles ought never to be put under a bushel. To hide the divine words would be a great sin against the Most High, and to warn you against it will be the aim of this morning's discourse. I shall speak with the earnest prayer that both to myself and to each one of you there may be a personal voice from God stirring every conscience as to this matter, and making each one of us enquire whether or no we also can say, "I have not concealed the words of the Holy One."

We shall divide our subject thus. First, we shall have a little to say about *the sin to be avoided*: then we will give some strong *arguments for avoiding it*: and, thirdly, suggest some *methods by which we may be enabled to avoid it*.

**I.** Here is A SIN TO BE AVOIDED concealing the words of the Holy One. Now, we can conceal those words *from ourselves* as well as from others. "How conceal them from ourselves?" say you. I think that very great stress must be laid upon this form of the evil, which lies at the root of the second shape of it. We can conceal the word of God from ourselves in many ways. The law of God speaks with searching and threatening voice: it tells us of our sin, it forewarns us of the punishment, and it sets our danger both present and future before our mind's eye: but there are thousands of persons who never give the law an opportunity of being heard in their hearts: they turn a deaf ear to anything which is unpleasant to them; they do not like to face the honest truth. You know why this is. Why does not a man who is a bankrupt in business take any pleasure in his books? Why is it that he postpones all settlements and endeavors to forget his affairs? Is it not because his ruin is near at hand? If there is any truth, my friend, that you are afraid of, you have cause to be afraid of it; but let me forewarn you that there is no escaping from a fact by endeavoring to forget it. Every honest man, every brave man, every man who is truly a man, would like to face his true condition, and see what and where he is. One of the prayers which I commend to your frequent use is this, "Lord, let me know the very worst of my case, that I may not be living upon vain pretensions, and may not be pluming myself with being in a happy condition while all the while I

am in awful danger.” Let it never be said of any one of you that you  
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concealed the words of the Holy One about yourselves by refusing to feel their force lest they should end the flattering visions of your fond conceit. Love truth even though it cut you to the quick. Ask God to search you and try you, and to make you sensible of sin and of judgment to come: this is the part of honesty and common sense. You will indeed be foolish if you conceal the words of the Holy One from your conscience, and so flatter your soul into destruction.

Others conceal the gospel word, that word which speaks of the free gift of pardoning mercy, which is of many offenses unto justification. They go about to find out some way of their own for self-salvation, and do not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God. Beloved, do pray the Lord to help you to know the gospel thoroughly; and to understand its glorious simplicity, its sweet freeness and boundless fullness. Do not put out the light, which alone can lead you to eternal life. Do not shut your eyes to the lamp divine; do not conceal from yourselves those humbling but yet soul-saving doctrines, which make for your souls eternal peace. Shut not against yourselves the one gate of paradise. Hide the gospel in your heart by all means, but hide it not from your heart, lest you sin against your own soul.

I ought, also, to warn every brother here of concealing any of the words of God from himself, by accepting half the truth and rejecting the rest.

Receive *the whole of revelation*. Some professors have favorite texts and choice portions of Scripture, and they regard other parts of the word with aversion, avoiding them as much as possible, because they do not agree with their system of divinity, and need much squaring before they will fit in with their foregone conclusions. They do not read such passages, or read them carelessly, or a commentator is sought out who, by the exercise of much ingenuity, will impute another meaning than the true one to the words of God. Brethren, open your souls to divine light. Give the word of God free admittance into your spirits. Lay no embargo upon any form of truth; demand no toll for the commodities of heaven. Let your mind be an open port, carrying on a free trade in the treasures of the gospel. Believe whatever God says, because God says it, though you may not always see its why and wherefore or perceive its internal consistency. Be prepared, and even anxious, to know the whole truth as far as you can know it, and let it pervade your entire being with its holy influence. It will be a terrible thing if one of these days you shall have to say, “I rejected a great truth. I had a suspicion that it was so, but I did not wish to believe it, and so I shut  
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my ears to its evidence. I had a leaning towards the opposite view and I felt committed to it, and so refused to alter.” Open both your eyes, my brethren. If you cannot see everything, yet see all you can see, and pray the Lord to take each scale away that you may know all the truth, and so the truth may make you wholly free.

There is, again, a concealing of the truth from ourselves in one other

respect, namely, when we try to avoid the word of command. There be some professed Christians of peculiar doctrinal opinions to whom the word "duty" is something dreadful, and if the preacher dwells upon gospel precept they call him "legal." I am not much in awe of that word myself, for being interpreted it means lawful, and none of us would like to be unlawful preachers. These folks insinuate that the preaching of the practical precepts of the gospel is in conflict with the grace of God, and is little better than preaching up human merit; whereas the doctrine of God our Savior is always a doctrine according to holiness, and good works are the sure results of true faith. True gospel preaching does not decry holy living; nay, it sets up the highest possible standard and declares the way to reach it. Beware of picking and choosing in reference to the commands of Christ. Some professors object to much of the teaching of him whom they call Master and Lord. The forgiving of injuries as we hope to be forgiven, the non-resistance principle of turning ' the other cheek when one is smitten, these are very objectionable to ordinary religionists. Such precepts are denounced as impracticable, and it is asserted that they cannot be carried out. Doing unto others as ye would that they should do to you is regarded as a golden precept for other people to practice towards our dear selves, but not at all a practical maxim from us to the general public. When persons speak of our Lord's precepts as good but impracticable, they make him out to be an amiable simpleton. Is this their reverence for the incarnate wisdom? I need not stop to quote examples, but there are many such things in the word of God as precepts which good men decline to see, which, indeed, they declare that they cannot see. If you put a gold piece over the boldest printed verse in the Bible you will not be able to see the passage; and there are some whose profits in business, whose position in life, above all, whose "respectability" will not allow them to see certain precepts, and so they do not see them, and they pass through life without obeying the plain command of the Lord. I pray you do not so, for willful ignorance is no excuse for disobedience. It is written, "He that knew his Master's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes;" and, mark you, he that

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did not know his Master's will, but might have known it and deliberately declined to know it, shall take his place with those who bear the heavier punishment. The plea of ignorance shall not avail such persons except it be to make them also take their place with the man who receives the few stripes, and so they shall partake in both the greater and the lesser scourging, inasmuch as they are worthy to range with both kinds of offenders. Try to know what God would have you do, and pray that by his Holy Spirit when you know it you may put it into speedy and cheerful practice, and this shall be a comfort to you.

Still, the point I want to bring out is that the holy man in our text *had not concealed God's truth from others* . We can do this in many ways. We can conceal the words of the Holy One by *not confessing the truth at all*. A Christian, but he never said so! He hid himself along with Joseph of Arimathea, although he never offered his new tomb to his Lord. He

justified himself by the example of Nicodemus, though he never brought spices for his Lord's burial! There was a time when there might be secret disciples of Christ, but that was before the cross was lifted up; but it is written concerning our Lord's death that the thoughts of many hearts shall be revealed by it, and now Christ's followers follow him openly. I should not like to be among those who expect to slink into heaven by a back door, some dark night, and intend never to disclose themselves till they throw off the mask, and stand before the wondering eyes of angels, Christians who passed through the world disguised as unregenerate men. No, no; our Lord has said, 'He that confesseth me before men, him will I confess; but he that denieth me, him will I deny.'" Do not run risks upon that score, if you love the Lord, say so; if you expect him to own you, own him.

We may conceal the words of the Holy One, although we have made an open confession, by a *sinful silence* about the gospel towards others, I am afraid I should not be too censorious if I said that there are many professors of religion who never talk of Christ to others, and never seek the salvation of anybody. Are there any such people here now in this gallery, or down below in this area? You have found a medicine which has healed your soul, but you never mention it to the thousands who are sick around you! You have not even named it to your own children! Can such cruelty be possible? Where do you sit? Are you there? No, good people do not move away from him! He has something human about him I hope still, though certainly not much that is *humane*. You were hungry and you have found bread, and you have eaten it; and yet though around you thousands

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are perishing with hunger, you have no pity on them! Many loaves are in your stores at home, but you spare none for these starving ones. You eat your morsel alone; and all the while thousands are dying outside your window, yea, they are perishing by millions. Do you care nothing for their woes? Are you a man or a demon? The Lord have mercy upon you! I will say no more than this, for I think I need not prove that it must be an atrocious sin for a man to know the words of the Holy One and not to make them known to others. This sin is easily committed by a silence, which pleads modesty, but which ought to confess to cowardice, therefore be aware of the cheat.

Some who speak often, nevertheless conceal the words of the Lord by *their own words*. The Roman Catholic Church stands convicted of concealing the words of the Holy One, by the use of the Latin tongue in the daily service. Whatsoever there is of good in the mass, ought to be spoken in such language that everybody can understand and receive it; but instead thereof the people stand and look on and know not what is being done, and if there be aught that might edify and instruct, they are not cognizant of it, because it is hidden from them by words unknown to them. Protestants! you condemn this practice, but are not many of you guilty yourselves? Did you listen to that splendid sermon? What rhetoric! What oratory! But those poor people in the aisles did not understand a word, or if they did they only comprehended disconnected sentences, and lost the soul of the discourse.



Is this right? Is this according to the Scriptural idea of preaching? ‘Oh, but,” you say, “the great man does not preach to that class of people .” But his Master did, and he bade men take note that in the gospel dispensation the poor have the gospel preached unto them. He would have his ministers preach so that they can be understood of all men. It is a pity when you hang the cross with your artificial flowers until you hide the wounds of Christ. Down, down, down with all your tawdry rhetoric! Your so-called eloquence deserves a curse, since it robs the simple of a blessing. Few things have so much damaged the church of God as “the wisdom of words.” A sweet and solemn simplicity which a child can comprehend is after the fashion of our Master, therefore let us aim at it. When you talk about Jesus Christ, make your speech very plain, lest under the ornaments of your language you should conceal the words of the Holy One.

The thing can be done again by clouding the truth with *error*. There is such a thing as laying a substratum of truth, and then overlaying it with human opinions, after the manner of the boastful school of modern thought, whose

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novelties are set before us as the matured fruit of the culture of the nineteenth century: this also is concealing the words of the Holy One. You may, perhaps, have seen ancient parchments containing words of holy writ, which have been covered over and then re-written with popish legends: these palimpsests (that is their technical name) are the types and symbols of the discourses of the philosophical divines of the school of *culture*. The gospel of Jesus Christ is hidden by their so-called “thought,” — *their own* thoughts are set before the thoughts of God. What shall we say to such thinking but that it is a presumptuous setting up of human intellect above the revelation of the Lord? What shall we say of such culture but that it cultivates a pride which had better have been cut up by the roots? It conceals the words of the Holy One that fallible man may sit upon the throne of wisdom, and make his own religion, and be his own God.

We may yet further conceal the words of God by an inconsistent life. You have often heard it said that the worldling does not read his Bible, but he reads professing Christians; he never troubles to read a chapter, but he reads his godly relatives. Many a man has found Christ through reading some dear and venerated mother, whose living and dying experience has been God’s testimony to his soul. See, then, if our lives are crooked, perverse, unkind, ungenerous, unholy, selfish, un-Christly we conceal the words of God; for men will not read a true gospel in us, nor have a true idea of our religion. They will not care to hear a gospel, which produces such characters as ours, if those characters are unlovely. Men lay all our faults at the door of our Master: and thus we crucify him afresh. They say, “That is your religion,” though they must know better. They will always say so, for after this manner the enemies of God have always gloried over Israel. He who lives not after a godly and holy sort is guilty of concealing the words of the Holy One in the most injurious manner. Let us all try to avoid this sin, because it is contrary to the practical genius of Christianity, which commands godly men to shine as lights in the world. Sinful silence,

as to the blessed word of grace, is rebellion against our Lord's last command-"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"; therefore, be not chargeable with so grave a crime.

**II.** In the second place we will give a mere outline of the ARGUMENTS FOR AVOIDING THIS SIN. The subject is weighty and deserves a longer consideration, but time compels me to condense. And first, the man who conceals the word of God is out of order with God. God speaks that he may be heard, and that his mind may be known. The evident design of

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words is to make known the speaker's mind. To run parallel with his wish, therefore, is to give his words free course to the ends of the earth. O thou who professest to be a child of God, wilt thou run counter to the design of the Most High, and when he speaks wilt thou by concealing his words make him to be as though he spake not? Such a silence is out of gear with the whole course of nature. "The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork: day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge." The whole creation after its own inarticulate manner proclaims its Maker and Preserver. Rocks find a voice, and waters have a tongue. Stars sing by shining, and darkness preaches by its solemnity. Shall man alone be dumb? God forbid that he should be creation's silent chord when every other string is vibrating with praise. No; let us pray the Holy Spirit to put us into order with God and with his universe, and let us no more conceal his words.

If you wish to see the sin of concealing the gospel, think of the consequences, which would have followed, if others had done so. If the apostles had never risked their lives to preach, what had the nations been? If martyrs had never yielded their blood in testimony, would not thick darkness have brooded over the nations still? Imagine the consequences, if you can, if Luther had taken the advice of his godly but timid friend, when he said, "Get thee to thy cell and pray: meddle not with things too high for thee." Imagine what history would have been if Wycliffe, and Tyndal, and Calvin, and Zwingle, and all those lights of the world, had hidden themselves through cowardice. They had been guilty, but we had been miserable. Now, what would have been criminal in them must be evil in us, also, in proportion to our degree. We owe it to coming generations that we hand on the torch of truth as it has been handed down to us; let us not be unfaithful to our trust.

If we conceal the words of the Holy One, we shall evidently err, because the motive for so doing can hardly be supposed to be other than sinful. If we conceal God's truth, it will probably be out of cowardice, and to be a coward under the command of such a Captain as ours is treason. Probably, self-love will be the ruling motive, but we are told expressly that he who loves his life shall lose it, and that Christ is to be better loved than life itself. Those who love the word of God, are often moved to do so by pride, which cannot stoop to be despised; or fear, which dreads ridicule; or love of the world, which seeks the applause of men. Is it not atrocious

ingratitude to him who was derided and spit upon for our sakes if we hide  
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his glory to escape from shame? I feel it difficult to conceive an argument for concealing God's word, which would hold water for a single moment; certainly I can invent none which will bear the test of the great trial day to which we all must come. If then the motive of such concealment is evil, it must itself be evil.

I have already hinted that common humanity requires that if we have received the precious truth of God, we should not conceal it. I feel as if your natures responded to the remark, and that I needed not again enforce it, having done so already. If you love men, if you would make them happy here, if you would save them from perishing hereafter, I beseech you make known to them with holy earnestness the way of salvation contained in the words of the Holy One. For if not, be it known unto you that all the results of concealment will be chargeable upon you. If the next generation should become more wicked than the present, and still more ignorant of the gospel, the fact will be chargeable upon those who conceal the words of God today. If the masses through not knowing the gospel reject it and continue in their sin, the calamity and crime will be charged upon those dumb lips, which never speak of Jesus. If sinners sink to hell, passing out of this world unsaved, and they have come into contact with Christian men who gave them no warning, on whose skirts will their blood be found? Yea, more; recollect that even if sinners be saved by some other agency it does not exonerate those who neglected to warn them; for since the silence naturally tended to destruction those who were guilty of it shall be judged as if the uninstructed were destroyed, even though by God's interposition it is not so. If the natural result of any line of conduct is prevented by divine interference its criminality is by no means lessened. The conduct itself may be judged by what it would naturally result in if it were left to itself. Many a man has been guilty of murder who nevertheless did not actually spill his fellow's blood, because he did that which he knew would kill; and it is no praise of his that death did not come of it. So, if a corrupt, unholy silence would slay a soul, even though that soul be saved, the wickedly silent one is guilty of soul murder all the same. You are shifting uneasily in your seats, some of you; this is a good sign, for many might do so without being too sensitive.

How again, dear friends, can any man prove his loyalty to his God or his likeness to the Savior, if he continues to conceal the words of the Holy One? What canst thou do for God but obey him, and when he speaks to thee gladly make known to others the truth which has sounded in thine  
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ears? How canst thou be like to Jesus, thy professed Master, if thou hast no witness to bear for the good of men? He went about doing good, his life was transparent, he wore the gospel on his sleeve, spoke it with his eyes, and revealed it in his daily life. How canst thou be like him if thou dost smuggle away the gospel as if it were contraband goods to be hidden away from all eyes? How canst thou bury the priceless truth like a miser who

hoards up his cankered gold? Tell out the heavenly message! Tell it all around! Tell it so long as voice remains! If thou art a true servant of God thou canst not stifle the voice of Jesus, who out of heaven cries to the sons of men.

Now, think once more and we shall see the sinfulness of the conduct we denounce. What will it be to meditate upon a dying bed on having known the truth, but having never in any way assisted to spread it? What will it be to the with eternity just before you, and to reflect, 'I have been a member of a church many years, but I have never brought in a single convert. I sat in my pew, and I knew the divine secret, but I never told even a child of it. Neither by pen nor tongue did I make Jesus known. I left that to the minister. I knew there were good people about who cared for men's souls, but I had no such feeling: I kept myself to myself, and felt no anxiety about my neighbors. I had very little care as to whether souls were saved or not. I was glad when I heard of an increase to the church, but not very particularly so; I was rather sorry when things were down,-not so sorry that I lost my appetite, or lay awake ten minutes. I did not trouble myself more than I could help, for I was foolish enough to dream that the best thing I could do was to consult my own interests, and I fancied that my chief end was to enjoy myself for ever.' Now, I can imagine such a person sore beset with horrors when he comes to die, and struggling hard to get anything like a glimpse of hope. His whole life has been that of selfishness, how can he be a Christian? Conscience will ask him, 'Is this Christ-like, this keeping back of the divine bread from the perishing millions, this concealing of the light of God? Surely you are no follower of the Crucified!'

How will such conduct look at the last great day? The Lord Jesus will say to some, 'I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink.' Now mark, these sentences refer to temporal bread and water, but they must be more emphatic still when they relate to spiritual things. If the Lord Jesus shall say, 'There were hungering souls, and you professed to know the gospel, but you gave them no meat: there were 331

thirsty souls, and you professed to have drank of the water of life, and you gave them no drink,' can there be any answer? Will not such persons stand speechless, dumbly confessing the justice of the sentence, 'Depart, ye cursed'?

**III.** I shall close by mentioning one or two METHODS BY WHICH WE MAY AVOID THIS SIN. I am speaking now to you who have believed in Jesus and are truly his own disciples.

First, take care that you make an open profession of your faith. Come out from the world and unite with the people of God. If you do not make a profession, I do not see how you can be found innocent of the charge of concealing the Lord's words.

When you have done that, keep yourself clear of sinful silence by very often speaking to others of the things of God. I was greatly pleased this

week when a brother minister said to me, "A man has just joined our church, a rough man, who mixed in company that was not likely much to improve him, and yet he has been really made a new man. He was accustomed to go round to houses with small casks of beer for a large brewery, and among the rest he called at a certain house where the servant is a member at the Tabernacle. She had not seen him more than once or twice before she began to ask him whether he knew the Savior, and to question him about his soul, and when he called each month she spoke to him again, till at last he who had never thought of religion, nor entered a place of worship at all, was brought to the feet of Jesus, and to become an honor to the church of which he is a member." This minister said, "I hope all your members do as that servant does." I told him I knew a great many of you did, but no doubt some of you did not. You who do not may well fidget upon your seats, as you take home the hint. Henceforth at every opportunity speak of Jesus to those around you, lest you be found guilty of concealing the words of the Holy One.

Some of you cannot *speak* very much because you are naturally diffident and slow of speech. Try and overcome the infirmity, but if you cannot do so, do not conceal the words of the Most High on that account, but write letters of personal entreaty. You can do this, cannot you? Some of you can write very well indeed, and write so much that you have to cross your letters, which is much easier for you to write than for friends to read. As you can write so well, do write for Jesus Christ. Do not cross your letter lest you conceal your meaning, but write earnestly and lovingly for Jesus.

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You can also circulate what has been written by other people, though I do not think it so good a thing to do as writing yourself. You may send tracts and sermons, but let them be such as you may hope that people will read. Sometimes you may write out part of a tract, and it will attract them all the more for being your own handwriting.

Another thing may be done. If you feel that when you have spoken and written you have still not done much, help other people who have greater gifts. A great deal may be done by imitating Aquila and Priscilla, who helped Apollos. It is not given to everybody to preach to large numbers, or to preach at all, but you can often pick up a young man and say, "I will help him in his education and encourage him in his first efforts." You can always help young men by filling the offering box, which supports the College.

I married a gentleman on this platform some time ago who said to me, "I wish I could preach; but I will tell you what I will do, I will keep a man to preach: I will find the money and you will find the man." I told him I must have him speak, too, as best he could. He said he would, but he wished to have somebody to speak better. Men of wealth should copy this example. Help the colporteurs, help the city missionaries, help all those who publish the word of the Lord.

And lastly, and this morning most to the point, there are the heathen perishing for lack of knowledge. Millions of voices call out of the darkness

to you, 'Come over and help us! You have the light, bring it to us! You have the bread, come and feed us! We perish, we perish, we perish.' Brethren, the heathen are perishing. Will you let them perish? I wish that some young men here would go for missionaries. One of the leaders of a missionary society cheered my heart last week when he took out of his pocket an old sermon of mine, marked and crossed and scored. He said, 'You will like to see that, Mr. Spurgeon.' 'What about it?' 'That was given to me by a young man who has joined our mission. He read that sermon, and marked the passages which touched his heart, and now he is at work in China. I looked upon that sermon with great delight. I think I felt more pleased with that old sermon *than if I had received a wreath of gold*. I felt gratified that I had brought a young and fervent heart to devote itself to the Lord Jesus Christ. Give me like joy each of you; and if you cannot go among the heathen personally, help others to do so. Give this morning a liberal collection, and may God accept it at your hands for Christ's sa ke.

# A CURE FOR UNSAVOURY MEATS: OR, SALT FOR THE WHITE OF AN EGG.

NO. 1730

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 5TH, 1883,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*‘Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt?  
or is there any taste in the white of an egg?’ -Job 6:6.*

THIS is a question which Job asked of his friends, who turned out to be so unfriendly. Thus he battles with those “miserable comforters” who inflamed his wounds by pouring in rejoyce and vinegar instead of oil and wine. The first of them had just opened fire upon him, and Job by this question was firing a return shot. He wanted the three stern watchers to understand that he did not complain without cause. If he had spoken bitterly, it was because he suffered grievously. He was in great bodily pain; he was enduring great mental depression; and at the same time he had been smitten with poverty and bereavement; he had, therefore, reason for his sorrow. He had no comforts left, and every arrow of grief was sticking in his flesh: if he did groan, he had something to groan for. His were not sorrows which he had imagined; they were real and true, and hence he asks this question first, ‘Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass? or loweth the ox over his fodder?’ If these creatures lift up their notes of complaint, it is when they are starving. When the wild ass cannot find a mouthful of grass anywhere, then his complaint is heard far and near. When the ox at the stall has no fodder-when he is fastened there, and no husbandman brings him

provision-then he lows, and there is good reason for his bellowing. Job seems to say, "I do not complain without cause. If I still enjoyed my former comforts, or even a tithe of them, you should hear no voice of murmuring  
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from me. But I am tried to the utmost. I am grievously afflicted, and there is overflowing cause for my moanings." He had lost all care to breathe; the zest of life was gone; no joy remained to make existence worth the having. He was like one who finds no flavour in his food, and loathes the morsel, which he swallows. That which was left to him was tasteless as the white of an egg; it yielded him no kind of comfort; in fact, it was disgusting to him. He was fed, he says, upon meat which yielded him no solace. "The things that my soul refused to touch are as my sorrowful meat." Therefore, he virtually asks his friends, "How can you expect me to eat such meat as this without sighs and tears? Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? Is there any taste in the white of an egg?" He means that everything about him had lost its flavour, and life had become dull and dreary to him, and therefore they must not wonder that he uttered words of complaint. The speech, also, to which Job had listened from Eliphaz the Temanite did not put much sweetness into his mouth; for it was devoid of sympathy and consolation. If you read it at home you will see that it was worthy to be the first of a singular selection of galling utterances. Job, we must admit, was sufficiently acid himself, and abundantly sarcastic; but his friends produced the irritation, and took care always to repay him double for all his wormwood. For every hard speech of his they returned compound interest. They grieved and vexed his upright soul till he said no more than the truth when he cried, "Miserable comforters are ye all." Here he tells them that Eliphaz had administered unto him unsavoury meat without salt;-mere whites of eggs, without taste. Not a word of love, pity, or fellow feeling had the Temanite uttered. He had spoken as harshly and severely as if he were a judge addressing a criminal who was suffering no more than he deserved. Looking at the speech, and looking at all his surroundings, poor Job feels that he has very unsavoury meat to eat, and he asks them whether they expect him to eat it without salt. They have given him something that is no more gratifying to him than the white of an egg, and he enquires if they really think that he can accept this at their hands, and thank them for their treatment.

We may now forget the much-tortured patriarch Job, and apply this text to ourselves. "Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg?" Three thoughts arise out of it.

**I.** The first point will be this that A WANT OF SAVOR IS A VERY GREAT WANT in anything that is meant for food. I am not going to deliver a  
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cookery lecture, and so I shall not enlarge upon the passage so far as it refers to the bread upon our table, or the food which we eat and drink. Everybody knows that all kinds of animal life delight in food that has a flavour in it; and even "dumb driven cattle" will turn away from dry, flavourless food, and will go a long way to find something that has a juice



and a taste in it which suits the palate which God has created in them. It is exactly the same with regard to the food of our souls. It is a very great fault with a sermon when there is no savor in it. It is a killing fault to the people of God when a book contains a good deal of what may be true, but yet lacks holy savor-or what, in other words, we call "unaction."

Somebody says, "Tell us what unaction is." I can much more easily tell you what it is not. You know a discourse when there is savor in it; and you also know when a sermon is dry, sapless, marrowless; and yet you could not state the difference in words. Some sermons could not even be suspected of anything like unaction, their authors would sneer at you if you accused them of it; but salt is still to be had; the fat things, full of marrow, are not quite out of the market yet. But what kind of savor is that which we expect in a sermon?

I answer, first, it is a savor of the Lord Jesus Christ. Years ago, before ministers grew so wise as to question the inspiration of Scripture, and renounce the doctrine of atonement, there used to be men in the country whose ministry was full of savor to the people of God. There were numbers of Christians in London who would go to the north, or go to the south, or go to the east, or go to the west to hear such preachers, and count it a great feast to listen to them. What was there about them? Were they great critics? I do not suppose that the good men ever read a work on criticism. Were they profoundly learned? Assuredly they were not. Profoundly learned brethren were preaching in churches and chapels where there were more spiders than people. Those who displayed their learning and rhetoric had empty places, but these men were followed by multitudes, and wherever they spoke the places were too strait for them. Those who did not know the reason said one to another, "What is there about these men? We do not see any peculiar talent." And there was not much. "We do not see any profound learning." And there was none to see. "We do not hear anything of advanced thought and liberal ideas." No, these good men were innocent of these modern diseases. Yet there are people of God tonight, now grey-headed, who recollect the happy hours they spent, and the joyful seasons they knew while hearing these men, and how they journeyed

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home perhaps seven or eight or ten miles from such a sermon, and only wished they could go again the next night, when their labor was done, to be fed again. What was it that made this preaching so attractive, so edifying? What drew the Lord's people so far? What evoked such enthusiasm? Why, it was that the preacher spoke of his Lord, and never wandered from the cross. When we were children we learned Dr. Watts's catechism of the Bible; and I remember one question- "Who was Isaiah?" and the answer was, "He was that prophet who spoke more of Jesus Christ than all the rest." Who were these men, then, that were followed by God's people so earnestly? They were men that spoke more of Jesus Christ than all the rest. You have read Dr. Hawker's Morning and Evening Portions, perhaps? I do not suppose that you have learned much of fresh exposition from them, or that you have been struck with any great originality of idea

in them; but if you have read them profitably you have said to yourself, "Well, this one point there is in Hawker, his subject is Christ on the first of January, Christ on the last of December, and Christ all the other days of the year." He speaks of nothing else but Christ. He seems to bring forth the Lord Jesus in his portions every day as a matter of course, just as your maid always puts the bread on the table, whatever else she does not place there. So it was with Hawker and men like him, Christ crucified, was their all in all. Their dear Lord and Master was never long absent from their discoursing. If they preached doctrine, it was "the truth as it is in Jesus." If they preached experience, it was "to know him and the fellowship of his sufferings." And if they went into practice, as they did, their idea of holiness was to be made like to Jesus and to follow him without the camp, bearing his reproach. Now, I do not believe a sermon can have savor in it unless it has Christ in it, for he has the savor of all good ointments, and there is no sweetness without him. What shall we say of him? "Thy name is as ointment poured forth; therefore the virgins love thee." His name is so fragrant that it perfumes heaven itself: Jehovah smells a savor of rest in the name, and person, and work of his well-beloved Son. Therefore an essential to savoury meat is that it shall have Christ in it. He has said, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed," and there is no meat and no drink that has such savor in it as this. Oh, that we might hear more of a crucified Christ in all our places of assembly!

The next necessity to secure savor is a devout spirit in the preacher- a savor of devotion. I am trying to explain savor by not attempting a definition, but by noticing its accompaniments. Why, those men who have

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now gone to heaven, whom you used to hear, seemed to be praying while they preached: their sermons were devotions as well as discourses; their rhetoric was rapture, their oratory was emotion. Their preaching came from the heart; but it came also from "the deep that lieth under," that secret reservoir of everlasting truth which is opened up by the Spirit to those who know the Lord, and to none else. They could say, "All my fresh springs are in thee"; they drew up the truth, which they preached out of this deep, out of the very heart of God. They preached the gospel of grace us men that knew it, loved it, lived on it. It was no irksome task to them to speak of Christ, and grace, and pardon, and covenant faithfulness. You could not always see traces of elaboration or even of preparation about their utterances; but you could see something better-the sparkling salt of grace. If the midnight oil had not smeared their sermons, the unction of the Spirit had anointed them. Their heart was inditing a good matter, for they spake the things which they had made touching the King. They spake with such cheerfulness and reverence that it was good to hear them. They spake with profound belief that what they said was infallibly true, for had they not received it fresh from the Spirit of God? Coming from their heart, it went to your heart, and by their realizing faith you were helped to believe it joyfully. It is an in sign when the teacher of truth does not himself believe it; for thus he becomes a virtual spreader of error. David said, "I believed:

therefore have I spoken.” Do you not believe, brother? Then go home and be quiet till you do. At least, do not come into the pulpit until you know what your Lord would have you say. Woe to the man who lets the smoke of undried wood come from off his hearth and blow into poor seekers’ eyes. We want live coals from off the altar, and the less doubt-smoke the better. Where a man has evidently been with God to learn the truth, and has been baptized into the everlasting spirit of that truth, and therefore speaks what he does know and testifies what he has seen in the fear of the living God, there is a savor about his witness, and the saints discern it gladly. This holy savor cannot be imitated or borrowed; it must come of personal assurance. It is a holy thing, and the composition thereof is known only to the great Giver of all spiritual gifts, the Lord himself. It is a holy anointing oil, which comes not on man’s flesh, and is far removed from all carnality. It never comes on any man except as it descends from him who is “the Head,” and so drops even to the skirts of his garments. From Christ alone the true anointing comes, and blessed is he who is made partaker with him.

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Very well, then, as food without savor is an evil and undesirable sort of food, so is all Christian teaching unacceptable if it lack the savor of Christ, and of devotion.

Another matter goes to make up sweet savor in a discourse, and that is, a savor of experience. You used to delight in those men because they had tasted and tested the doctrines, which they preached. The younger brethren were somewhat at a discount, because you said, “That good brother speaks fluently, but he cannot have experienced so much as the man of God under whom I have now sat for many years.” You prefer to have the truth spoken to you by one who has felt for himself the renewing, upholding, and comforting power of divine grace; and I cannot blame you for your liking. If the preacher has done business on great waters, in deep soul trouble, or personal affliction, so much the better for you. If he is one who loves much because much has been forgiven him, so much the better for you. If he is a man conscious of his own infirmity and weakness, who speaks humbly of himself as out of the very dust, though he speaks confidently the word from heaven, so much the better for you. Such experience puts a kind of spice into the food, which he presents to you. It is so in all our communications one to another. We do not speak with certainty of edification unless we speak of what we have ourselves enjoyed. I have been greatly benefited by hearing an aged blind man stand up and tell of the faithfulness of God to himself. I have been much encouraged at times by hearing a poor but gracious woman near to the gates of death telling with tears in her eyes of the goodness of the Lord to her. Testimonies from such people have weight in them. These people do not play at religion. Poor and tried people, people with aches and pains, people who have none of this world’s comforts, people on the borders of the grave, tell us of the great Father’s love, and when they do so there is great force of conviction in their testimony. We attach weight to every word they say because their

experience is taken into consideration. I never heard a man who spoke more to my soul than dear Mr. George Muller. The sermon that I heard from him was like an address to a Sunday-school, it was so simple and unadorned; but then there was the man behind it-that simple-hearted child of God, who has believed the promises, and has gone on doing wonders such as astonish all beholders. That man has no more doubt about God's answering his prayers than he has about twice two making four-why should he have? He acts out the truth which he has received-why should he not? Entertaining no modern questions and no ancient questions either, he

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triumphs by knowing the truth and living the truth, and rejoicing in the truth. Such a man is a pattern and example to us all, and there is a precious savor in what he utters, because he speaks experimentally of truths which he has carried out in his own life.

Thus three things help to make up savor in sermons-Christ as the doctrine, devotion as the spirit, and experience as adding weight to testimony.

But these three things are not the whole of it. There is a sacred something: it is not nameless, for I will name it by-and-by: it is a heavenly influence which comes into man, but which has no name among the things that belong to men. This sacred influence pervades the speaker, flavouring his matter, and governing his spirit, while at the same time it rests upon the hearer so that he finds his mind awake, his faculties attentive, his heart stirred. Under this mysterious influence the hearer's spirit is in a receptive condition, and as he hears the truth it sinks into his soul as snow-flakes drop into the sea. He finds himself warmed, and cheered, and comforted, and stirred up, as fainting men are wont to be when refreshed after a long fast. Now, what is this? Whence comes this savor? In a word, it cometh of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit bears witness with the word upon the quickened heart and conscience of the people of God, and that word becomes life, light, and power to them.

All this we greatly need; and if we have it not, what shall we do? I have often trembled as I have come to preach here lest I should have to speak among you without the help of the Divine Spirit. It would be much better to be silent. I could almost wish that we had the liberty of our Quaker friends just to sit still until we feel that we are moved to speak; for sometimes we might do better to wait without a spoken word for the hour and a half rather than for one of us to talk without the guidance of the Spirit of God. Pray much, beloved, that there may be a great deal of dew about-that heavenly showers may fall on us and on all the churches of God. Let our belief in the Holy Ghost never become a mere compliment which we feel bound to pay him; but in deep and reverent sincerity may we own that he is the great worker in the church-the real actor and doer of the wondrous works of quickening, saving, and comforting. Let us wait upon him with lowly spirits, feeling that we can do nothing without him, but that if he be with us then all is well.

Take away from any preaching or any teaching Christ as the subject, devotion as the spirit, experience as the strength of testimony, and the Holy

Ghost as being all in all, and you have removed all the savor; and what is left? What can we do with a savourless gospel? ‘Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? Is there any taste in the white of an egg?’ They said of a brother the other day, that he liked savoury doctrine. ‘He had a sweet tooth,’ they said. It was said in scorn; but if there is anything to be scoffed at in that matter I desire to be a partaker in the reproach, for I have a sweet tooth myself. I like such books as have savor in them; and I protest to you that whatever scorn it brings upon me, that the majority of modern books seem to me to be fit for nothing but to be burned. The old theology has the sweetness and the savor in it which the people of God delight in, and I for one mean to stick to it; for I cannot eat the white of your eggs; I cannot endure your unsavoury meat. I must hear of the electing love and covenant purpose of the Father-this is savoury meat such as my soul loveth. I must have teaching full of Christ and the doctrines of grace and the Holy Spirit, or my soul will die of famine. This is my first head.

**II.** Our second remark is this. I find a rendering given to the text, which, if it be not absolutely accurate, nevertheless states an important truth, namely, that **THAT WHICH IS UNSAVORY FROM WANT OF SALT MUST NOT BE EATEN.** I shall only mention this second head as a note of caution. A word to the wise suffices. There is a great deal in this world which is unsavoury for want of salt. I mean in common conversation. Alas, it is easy to meet with people-and even people wearing the Christian name-whose conversation has not a particle of salt in it. Nothing that tends to edification is spoken by them. Their talk has an abundance of gaiety, but no grace in it. They exhibit any amount of frivolity, but no godliness. In other conversation there is information weighty and solid upon common matters; but there is a lack of that spirit which God’s people desire to live in, for the Lord Jesus is forgotten. Someone said to me the other day, ‘When we were young people, we knew many good old folk who used to meet together and talk about the Lord Jesus Christ by the hour together, and we used to sit and wonder whether we should ever join in such talk as that. But where do you hear it now?’ So I said to him, ‘I hope that we can hear it in a great many places.’ said he, ‘I do not meet with it. I find that the ordinary talk among professors has not much in it for the helping of souls onward towards heaven.’ I do not profess to form a judgment on this matter, but I will say this-that it is a great pity if holy converse be a scarce commodity; and it is well for you and for me to get away from that

conversation which does not benefit us. If there is no salt in conversation, it will be unsavoury to a true Christian spirit, and the less he has of it the better.

Again, there is some talk in the world-I hope not among professors — vvhich has no salt in it even of common morality; and consequently it corrupts, and becomes impure and obnoxious. Old Trapp says, somewhat roughly, that it is full of maggots, and that is perhaps what Job meant. That

is to say, many persons use coarse allusions, and evil suggestions: to such things shut your ears. Things are often said which sparkle, but the flash is born of decay. The wit which owes its pungency to sin is of the devil. The brilliance which comes of corruption is not for holy eyes. Oh, child of God, never tolerate it in your company! If it be not in your power to stop evil communications, remove yourself out of their reach. It is not for us to associate with those whose lips are cankered with lascivious words. We have enough within these gunpowder hearts to make us afraid to go near the forge when the sparks are flying about. Let us keep ourselves from ever permitting corrupt communication to proceed out of our own lips: that would be horrible indeed. Let us avoid all company wherein the purity of a renewed heart would be in danger of taint. Yet I fear me that in our daily avocations we shall have grave cause to watch against the things which are unsavoury and corrupt, for the preserving salt is not so abundantly used in these days as it ought to be.

Now, the same thing is true, not only of common conversation, but of a great deal of modern teaching. Have nothing to do with teaching that is tainted with heresy, brethren. If a man's discoursing has not salt enough in it to keep false doctrine out of it, it is not the kind of food for you. Clean provender is not so scarce that you need to eat carrion. Some like their meat rather high, and there are hearers who are inclined to a preacher who has a sniff of heresy about him; but, as for us, our taste conducts us where salt is found. Where grace is lacking we are not eager to be feeding. The banquets of truth need not be supplemented by the tables of error. But I shall not dwell upon this, because I require all my time for the third head.

**III.** The third point is, that THERE ARE CERTAIN THINGS IN THE WORLD WHICH NEED SOMETHING ELSE WITH THEM. "Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg?"

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There are many things in this world, which we cannot tolerate by themselves: they need seasoning with them. One of the first of these may read us a lesson of prudence; that is, reproof. It is a Christian duty to reprove a brother who is in a fault, and we should speak to him with all gentleness and quietness, that we may prevent his going farther into evil, and lead him back to the right way. But will you please remember, brothers and sisters, that the giving of reproofs is dainty work, and needs a delicate hand. It was said of good Andrew Fuller that frequently he gave a rebuke so severely that it reminded you of one who saw a fly upon his brother's forehead, and seized a sledge hammer to knock it off. It is the habit of some brethren to do everything forcibly; but in this case one needs more love than vigor, more prudence than warmth, more grace than energy. Some persons have a very quick eye for the faults of others, and they have a ready tongue to descant upon them when they perceive them; to all which they add a tendency to exaggerate the importance of the fault. Now, these brethren always reprove in a wrong way. Listen. One of them cries,-

‘Come here, brother! Come here. Let me take that beam out of your eye.’ The aforesaid ‘beam’ is really only a mote; and the brother who is addressed becomes indignant at such injustice, and will not have his eye touched at all. Why destroy your own influence by such unwisdom? If the mote can be removed, well and good; but if you will ruin the eye in the process, would it not be better to let it alone? We have known persons who, to spread truth, have killed love, which is truth’s life. They wish to set a brother right in doctrine, and, in order that his sight may be clearer, they knock his eye out, and call it ‘controversy.’ It is one thing to be ‘valiant for the truth,’ and quite another thing to be bitter for your own opinion. Rebuke, however kindly you put it, and however prudently you administer it, will always be an unsavoury thing: therefore, salt it well. Think over it. Pray over it. Mix kindness with it. Rub the salt of brotherly love into it. Speak with much, deference to your erring friend, and use much tenderness, because you are not faultless yourself. Speak acknowledging all the excellences and virtues of your brother which may, after all, be greater than your own; and try, if you can, to wrap up what you have to say in gentle words of praise for something else wherein the friend excels. Express the rebuke in one of your Master’s sentences, if you can find one that will exactly fit. Give your patient the pill silver-coated with gentleness; it will be received the more willingly and have none the less efficacy. If you speak unkindly, the reprovèd one may turn round upon you in anger, and if you ask him why he is wroth, he may answer, ‘Can

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that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg?’ Do not expect your neighbor to eat your eggs without salt. Do not expect him to receive your words of rebuke without the true kindness of voice and spirit which will act as salt. Be not silent about sin, but be not harsh in your rebuke of it. Savour your admonitions with affection, and may the Lord make them acceptable to those who need them.

Now for other matters, which many people do not like by themselves; I mean, the doctrines of the gospel. The true doctrines of the gospel never were popular, and never will be; but there is no need for any of us to make them more distasteful than they naturally are. The human heart especially revolts at the sovereignty of divine grace. Man is a king, so he thinks, and when he hears of another king he straightway grows rebellious. Man would have God bound hand and foot to give his mercy as man likes; and when the Lord defies the bond and declares, ‘I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion,’ man burns with wrath. When the Lord saith, ‘It is not of him that willeth or of him that runneth, but of God who showeth mercy,’ man is up in arms. He will not brook the divine prerogative. It becomes us who preach this doctrine to take care that we do not add needless offensiveness to it. No one of the doctrines of grace is palatable to man naturally. He does not like the truth of total depravity. Over that he grows exceeding wroth. He calls it a libel upon the nobility of human nature. I have often read of human

nature as a noble thing; but I am sorry to say that I have never seen it in that aspect. I am told that our fallen nature is sublime, and that we defame mankind when we speak of them as altogether fallen and say, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." It is little wonder that this is unsavoury to carnal pride. As to the doctrine of justification by faith alone, Mrs. Toogood stamps her foot at such teaching-is she to be none the better for all her good works? Mr. Good-Enough gnashes his teeth at the idea that human merits cannot save. He cannot endure to hear that we must be saved by faith in Jesus Christ, and that the most moral and excellent need Christ quite as much as the most depraved and abandoned. Carnal minds have no taste for the gospel: they rave against the system of theology that glorifies God. Man wants to be the great Man, and he would have God to be the little god, and then he will be satisfied; but if God be set on high as filling all in all, then straightway many are offended.

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Brothers and sisters, since we want people to receive these doctrines, what must we do? We must mix an abundance of salt with them. If the gospel be distasteful we must add a flavouring to it. What shall it be? We cannot do better than flavour it with holiness! Where there is a holy life men cannot easily doubt the principles out of which it springs. If it be so that men and women are kindly, generous, tender, affectionate, upright, truthful, Christlike, because of the doctrines they hold, then the world begins to think that there must be truth in those doctrines. The evangelical school must always draw its strongest arguments first from the gospel, and next from the lives of its believers; and if we cannot point to those who profess this faith as being famous for holiness, what will the world say? In former ages holy living has been our battle-axe and weapons of war. Look at the Puritanic age. To this day it is the stumbling-block of infidelity. In these times it is very common to laugh at the Puritans, and to say that their faith is outworn, and that we have got beyond their teaching; and yet the very same men who say this cannot read Carlyle's writings without marveling at Oliver Cromwell, and the great men who trooped around him. Do they never say to themselves, Upon what meat did these men feed that they have grown so great? They cannot turn to the lives of the Puritans without reading how they saturated all England with godliness, till as you passed down Cheapside in the morning you would have noticed that there was scarcely a single house in which the blinds were not drawn down because the inhabitants were at family prayer. The whole land felt the force of truth and righteousness through these men-these poor, benighted, foolish Puritans, whom our boys fresh from college call by in names. In their contests for truth the Puritans were as mighty as Cromwell's Ironsides in the days of battle, when they drove the foe before them like chaff before the wind. Then there followed an age of driveling, in which our Nonconformity existed, but gradually dwindled down, first into Arminianism, and then into Unitarianism, until it almost ceased to be. Men know that it was so, and yet they would act it all over again. They read history, and yet demand that the old doctrine should again be given up, and



the experiment be tried again of starving our churches with human philosophies. Oh, fools, and slow of heart! Will not history teach them? No, it will not if the Bible does not. If they hear not Christ and his apostles, neither will they believe even though another Unitarian ghost should pass before their eye. Surely evil days are near, unless the church shall again clasp the truth to her heart.

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But I diverge. The point I had in hand was this—that in the case of the Puritans their doctrines were rendered respectable and forceful by their glorious lives; and it must be so now. Holy living must salt our doctrines. We must be like Christ that men may believe what we have to say about Christ.

Now, a third egg which cannot be eaten without salt is affliction.

Afflictions are very unsavoury things. I think I hear one say, “I should not mind any affliction except the one which now oppresses me.” Brother, you speak as other foolish brethren have done before you. This has been my language in my turn. Somebody sitting next to you would not mind your affliction at all; at least, he thinks so; it is his own cross, which is so galling. The loads borne by people in yonder street have no great weight for you; but if you had to carry a sack of flour yourself, the sack would prove very heavy. We all know the weight of our own burden, but we underestimate that of others. People in trouble know where their own shoe pinches; yet other people’s shoes pinch too, and other people’s crosses are weighty. “No affliction for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous.”

Afflictions are unsavoury meat. What is to be done with them, then? Why, let us salt them, if we can. Salt your affliction with patience, and it will make a royal dish. By grace, like the apostle, we shall “glory in tribulations also.” Look at those who endure constant infirmities. Do you know any? I do. A dear sister has been blind many years, and yet I do not know a happier woman than she is. She has more visions of joy than the most of us, though her eyes are closed to the light of the sun. I know a brother in the ministry who has lost his sight almost entirely; but he preaches more sweetly than ever he did; he has become a seer in out Israel, enjoying a depth of insight into truth, which few possess. Truly the lame take the prey! Some that are deaf hear the voice of their Master better than others. And so infirmities become things to glory in, since Christ’s power the better rests upon us.

It is so when the Lord gives grace to the poor man and he becomes contented with his lot. Has he not far greater joy than the rich man who still craves for more? Many of God’s poor prisoners in the martyr days were happier in prison than ever they were out of it: in the days of the Covenanters, when they worshipped God on the bleak hill or by the moss side, the Lord was specially near to them. When those times had passed away, and they went to decorously, and sat with the congregation undisturbed, they said, “Ah, man, the Lord was not here to-day as he was

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out on the brae and on the hill-side.” The Master was transfigured before

his disciples among the mists of the glens. Then he wore no veil over his face, but he revealed himself so clearly that the sanctuary among the hills was none other than the house of God and the very gate of heaven. The Lord salted their afflictions with his presence, and with the abundant power of the Holy Ghost, and so they enjoyed a sweet savor in them. It is even thus with you and me.

*'I can do all things, or can bear  
All sufferings, if my Lord be there  
Sweet pleasures mingle with the pains,  
While his left hand my head sustains.'*

There now, brother, do not go on eating that egg without salt; no longer say to yourself, "Here is nothing but the white, with no taste in it. I cannot bear to eat such loathsome food." Put the salt in, brother: put the salt in, sister. Have you been forgetting that salt? Have you failed to ask of the Lord grace equal to your day?—grace to see that "all things work together for good to them that love God"? Be forgetful no longer, but throw in a pinch of salt; then the tasteless thing will go down comfortably enough, and you will bless the name of the Lord for it.

I will not detain you longer to speak about persecution, though that is another unsavoury article, with which salt of consolation is much to be desired.

But, lastly, there is the thought of death. Is not death an unsavoury thing in itself? The body dreads dissolution and corruption, and the mind starts back from the prospect of quitting the warm precincts of this house of clay, and going into what seems a cold, rarefied region, where the shivering spirit flits naked into mystery untried. Who likes to sit down and think of his last hour,—the corpse, the coffin, and the shroud? The spade, and the mattock, and the falling clods make poor music for gay minds? Who cares for charnel houses? Oh, but dear friends, thoughts of death, when they are salted, are among the richest, daintiest things that ever come to the believer's table; for what is it to die? Is it not to end our pilgrimage, and come to the place where the many mansions be? Is it not to quit the stormtossed seas for the Fair Havens where all is bliss forever? Death strips the soul of its garments, and by itself this seems a trying process; but season it well, and you will long for evening in order to undress, that you may rest with God. Salt it well, and you will almost grow impatient of your length

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of days, and look for your last hours as children do for their holidays, when they may go home. Salt it well, and your heart will grow like hers whose husband tarries away, and she reckons how long it will be before he will come home again to her house and to her heart. You will cry, "Why are his chariots so long in coming?" I have known saints to salt their thoughts of death until they were transfigured into antepasts of heaven, and they began to drink of that wine of the kingdom which the Beloved will drink new with us in the day of his appearing. Oh, happy spirits who can do this!

"What salt," say you, "shall I mingle with my thoughts of death?" Why the thought that you cannot die: since because he lives you shall live also. Add

to it the persuasion that though you be dead, yet shall you live. Thoughts of the resurrection and the swinging open of the pearly gates, and of your entrance there; thoughts of the vision of the Well-beloved's face; thoughts of the glory that shall be yours for ever and ever at his own right hand these are the things with which to savor your meditations among the tombs.

As for you that are not in Christ, you must eat this unsavoury meat, and there will be no salt with it. I see you put it away from you. You say, "No, I do not mean to think of death." Oh, man, but you will have to die, and it may be full soon. Oh, woman, you will have to die; the seeds of death are in your bosom now. As surely as you live, you will have to die; and after death the judgment. This is the meat, which will be laid in your dish, and there will be no leaving it. This is the white of the egg, and you must even down with it, whether you will or no. It has no taste, which your palate can enjoy; it has no savor about it but that of fear. Ah, when your conscience awakes, what will you do with the burning thought that, dying, you must go where hope can never come? O soul, if you pass out of this world as you are, you can never see the face of God with joy, but you must be driven from his presence and from the glory of his power to know what that meaneth- "Where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." They say that everlasting does not mean ever lasting. What then? Are the righteous to perish after a while? In these two sentences the same word must mean the same thing- "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." If eternal life lasts forever, so must eternal punishment. When the righteous cease to be, the wicked will cease to be; when the godly cease their joy, the ungodly will cease their misery; but not till then. That is unsavoury meat for you. The Lord  
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help you to salt it, even yet, by believing in Jesus, and so finding eternal salvation. Amen.

# THE HAND OF GOD IN THE HISTORY OF A MAN.

NO. 1258

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING,  
OCTOBER 10TH 1875,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*'Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days of an hirelings' — Job 7:1.*

I WAS settling myself down yesterday to meditate upon the Word of God, and to prepare my mind to preach the gospel to you to-day, when, on a sudden, I had my subject marked out for me by a mournful messenger, for the angel of death pointed to it with his finger. There came into my

chamber an honored elder of this church, who in broken accents told me "our beloved brother, Henry Olney, is dead." He is my near neighbor, and I was in his house so lately that I could not realize the news. It seems that when he left the City at noon he felt a severe rheumatic pain in his shoulder, and on reaching home he sent for a doctor, who prescribed a slight remedy and advised him to lie down. He did so, and with a gasp or two he expired. A man in the prime of life, and apparently in full vigor of health, he went to his business for the last time that morning, and returned to die. The blow has fallen so suddenly that I am stunned and staggered by it, nor do I think that either of his three brothers, whose familiar faces we miss this morning, have yet recovered from the amazement caused by the stroke. Many around me were with him so short a time since that it is hard to believe one's own eyes and feel sure that there he lies a cold corpse, motionless upon the bed. But, oh, my brethren, how true it is that in the midst of life we are in death; and those often die first who least expected to go. If I had said to you this morning that our brother William Olney was gone? you would have said, "We are grieved at our loss, but we do not

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wonder, for he has been long sick;" but here the strong and stalwart brother, who ailed nothing has been taken away, while, thank God, the languishing invalid is still spared to us. Thus do they remain who expected to depart, and they depart who expected to remain. Who among us can reckon upon a single hour? We talk of being living men: let us correct ourselves, and feel from this moment that we are dying men, whose every breath brings them nearer to the grave. We are and are not; we walk in a vain show, and are disquieted in vain. We are unsubstantial as the shadowers of the flying clouds which on a summer's day flit over the face of the field and are gone.

When I look at that seat where our departed friend sat for years, the Lord seems to have come very near to us. I could almost put off my shoes from my feet in awful consciousness of his terrible presence. We can no longer think of the Lord as far away in heaven, he has been among us, he who toucheth the hills and they smoke has set his eyes upon our brother, and lo! he is not. Let me put it in a gentler manner: our Lord came into his garden to gather lilies, and his hand has been filled to our sorrow. When our heavenly Father comes so near to us, and in so solemn a manner, let us ask him wherefore he contendeth with us. Let us in solemn reverence approach him that we may hear his answer, and may be obedient to his word. The flower of the field stands amid the grass unconscious that the mower's scythe is busy, and though swath after swath has fallen beneath the pitiless stroke, the floweret smiles gaily, it cares not for its associate in the same field, and recks not of its own speedy fall. Its leaves are wet with dew, and its colors are bright in the sun, it mourns not for its fellows, but rejoices in unconsciousness of all that happens around it. In this respect ye are not as the grass of the field, but are endowed with understanding, so that ye are able to be instructed, or at least warned, by the fall of those around you. The sheep in their folds remark not that their fellows are taken away to the

slaughter. The cattle graze in the meadows in happy ignorance that death is abroad. Ye, however, are not “dumb, driven cattle.” To you it is given to know your own mortality, and you cannot suffer your comrades to be taken away one after another so rapidly, without feeling emotion, and gathering wisdom. Ye will hear the rod, and him that hath appointed it, and this morning ye will ask grace that the dead may be your schoolmasters and yourselves the scholars who cry “So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

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As best I shall be able this morning, I shall try and teach you, by the help of God’s Spirit, one lesson. It is this — *divine appointment rules human life*; and when we have learned that lesson, we shall, in the second place, *draw inferences from this truth*.

**I.** First, then, let us consider a truth which, I trust, none of us have ever denied, but have heartily accepted ever since we have been believers .

THERE IS A DIVINE APPOINTMENT RULING ALL HUMAN LIFE. Not that I single out man’s existence as the sole object of divine forethought, far rather do I believe it to be but one little corner of illimitable providence. A divine appointment arranges every event, minute or magnificent. As we look out on the world from our quiet room it appears to be a mass of confusion. He who studies history and forgets God might think that he was looking out on chaos and aid night, for events seem flung together in terrible disarray, and the whole scene is as darkness itself, without any order. Events happen which we deeply deplore — incidents which appear to bring evil, and only evil, and we wonder why they are permitted. The picture before us, to the glance of reason, looks like a medley of color, with dark shades where lights seemed needful, and glowing color where we might have looked for masses of black. Human affairs are a maze of which we cannot discover the clue. The world appears to be a tangled skein, and we weary ourselves with vain endeavors to disentangle it.

But, brethren, the affairs of this world are neither tangled, nor confused, nor perplexing to Him who seeth the end from the beginning. To him all things are in due course and order, and before him all forces keep rank and file. God is in all, and rules all. In the least as well as in the greatest, Jehovah’s power is manifested. He guides the grain of dust in the March wind, and the comet in its immeasurable pathway; he steers each drop of spray which is beaten back from the face of the rock, and he leads forth Arcturus with his sons. God is the dictator of destinies and appoints both means and ends. He is the King of kings, ruling rulers and guiding counsellors. Alike in the crash of battle and in the hush of peace, in the desolation of pestilence and famine, and in the joy of abounding harvests he is Lord. He doeth according to his will, not only in the army of heaven, but amongst the inhabitants of this loner world. Yon fiery steeds, which dash so terribly along the highway of time, are not careering madly: there is a charioteer whose almighty hands have held the reins for ages, and will never let them go. Things are not in the hurry-burly which we imagine, but

driven onward by a power which is irresistible, they are under law to God,  
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and speed onward without deviation towards the goal which he designs. All is well, brethren! It is night, but the watchman never sleepeth, and Israel may rest in peace. The tempest rages, but it is well, for our Captain is governor of storms. He who trod the waves of the Galilean lake is at the helm, and at his bidding winds and waves are quiet.

Our main point is that God rules mortal life; and he does so, first, *as to its term* — “Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?” He rules it, secondly, *as to its warfare*, for so the text might most properly be read — “Is there not an appointed warfare for man upon earth?” And, thirdly, he rules it *as to its service*, for the second clause of the text is, “Are not his days as the days of an hireling?”

First, then, *God’s determination governs the time of human life*. We shall all acknowledge this as to *its commencement*. Not without infinite wisdom did any infant’s life commence there and then, for no man is the offspring of chance. Not without a world of kindness did your life commence, dear friend, just where and when it did. Our child’s little hymn, in which he thanks God that he was not “born a little slave to labor in the sun,” contains a good deal of truth in it. A man’s whole life is mainly guided by its commencement; had we been born as thousands are where God was never known we might have been idolators at this hour. Who would wish to have first seen the light at the era when our naked forefathers sacrificed to idols? Who would wish to have stepped upon the stage of life amid the dense darkness of popery, when our childish hands would have been lifted up by superstitious parents in adoration of the Virgin Mary, and we should have been taught to worship some cast clout or rotten rug, superstitiously believed to be a relic of a saint? ‘Tis no small thing to have been born in the nineteenth century, when works of grace are to be seen on every side. Many of us should bless the Lord every day because in infancy we lay upon a Christian woman’s bosom, and were lulled to sleep with the sound of holy hymns, of which the name of Jesus was the theme. Our tiny feet were taught to run in the ways of righteousness, as far as parental instruction could effect the same, and this was no insignificant advantage. Blessed are the eyes which see the things which we see, and hear the things which we hear! All this is by the appointment of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our presence on earth in this day of grace was a matter altogether beyond our control, and yet it involves infinite issues; therefore let us with deepest gratitude bless the Lord, who has cast our lot in such an auspicious season.

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The *continuance* of life is equally determined of God. He who fixed our birth has measured the interval between the cradle and the grave, and it shall not be a day longer or a day shorter than the divine decree. How many times your lungs shall heave and your pulses beat have been fixed by the eternal calculator from of old. What reflections ought to arise out of this! How willing we should be to labor on, even if we be weary, since God

appoints our day and will not over-weary us, for he is no hard taskmaster. How glad we ought to be even to suffer if the Lord so ordains. It is sweet music that God draws forth from patient sufferers, and though the strings have to be painfully tightened ever and anon with many a grief and pang to us, yet if those dear hands of the chief musician can fetch out richer melody from those tightened strings, who among us would wish to have it otherwise, or ask to have the harp withdrawn from that beloved harper's hand before the wondrous strain is o'er? No, let us wait, for he appoints. If our griefs were the offspring of chance, we might pine to have them ended, but if the loving Lord appoints, we would not hurry him in his processes of love. Let the Lord do what seemeth him good. Here is good cheer for those who have lain so long upon the bed of pain, and who are apt to ask — 'Will it never end? O Lord, will the chariots of salvation never come? Have the angels quite forgotten thy servant in his sickness? Must he for ever remain a prisoner under his infirmity, loneliness, and decay? Hast thou placed me as a sentinel to stand upon my watch-tower through a night which will never end, and shall I never be relieved from my weary guard? Shall I never know rest? Must I for ever peer into the dark with these eyes so red with weeping? 'Courage, brother! Courage, sister, the Lord, the ever merciful, has appointed every moment of thy sorrow and every pang of thy suffering. If he ordains the number ten, it can never rise to eleven, neither shouldst thou desire it to shrink to nine. The Lord's time is best: to a hair's breadth thy span of life is rightly measured; God ordains all: therefore peace, restless spirit, and let the Lord have his way.

So, too, has he fixed life's *termination*. 'Is there not an appointed time for man upon earth?' a time in which the pulse must cease, the blood stagnate, and the eye be closed. Yes, my brethren, it is of no use for us to indulge any idle dream of living for ever here; a time of departure must come to every one of us, unless the Lord himself should appear on a sudden, and then we shall not die, but be changed. There is no man among us that liveth and shall not see death. In this war there is no discharge. Not only do the

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Scriptures teach us so, but our common sense and reason put the matter beyond all question.

What mean the grey hairs which fall like snow flakes upon our heads? What mean that stooping gait and failing strength? What mean the dimness of the eye and the tottering of the limbs? Do they not all show that the house is about to come down, for the lath and plaster of it are beginning to give way? Yet our earthly house will not fail us till the time ordained of heaven. There is an appointed time for deaths and God has fixed how we shall die, when we shall die, and where we shall die.

***'Plagues and deaths around me fly,  
Till he please I cannot die  
Not a single shaft can hit  
Till the God of love sees fit.'***

Diseases eager to slay are in ambush all around us, but none of their swords can come at us till Jehovah gives them leave. Behold the Lord shall



cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust, nor shall nightly pestilence nor midday destruction make thee afraid.

*‘What though a thousand at thy side  
At thy right hand ten thousand died,  
Our God his chosen people saves  
Amongst the dead, amidst the graves.’*

We are immortal till our work is done, but that work will not last for ever, and when it is concluded we shall have fulfilled our day, and shall receive our summons home.

All this is true; none will venture to dispute it, but let us remember that it is true for ourselves at this moment; for you, my brethren and sisters, it is true while here you sit. Realise it, and do not look on others as dying men while you yourselves are secure of long life. Be you also prepared to meet your God suddenly, for so you may be called to do. This fact is most solemn. We shall not live, but die, and that death may come in an instant. As I saluted my brethren this morning in the vestry I could not help expressing my pleasure and surprise that any of us were alive, for certainly it was quite as much a wonder that certain of us were alive, as that our friend should be dead. We might as readily have been taken away as he, and even more readily. God had ordained *his* death, he might have

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ordained ours. “Be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”

Yet this fact, to my mind, is most strengthening. The doctrine of predestination, when really believed, is like steel medicine, infuses a deal of iron into the mental system and builds up strong men. I am not such a predestinarian as Mahomet, who bade his soldiers rush to the fight, “for,” said he, “when your time comes to die you will die at home as well as in the battle, and Paradise is to be found beneath the shadow of swords.” But still I see that while the doctrine makes some men slumber, it is to nobler souls a mighty source of energy, and a fountain of courage. If duty calls you into danger — if you have to nurse the sick who are laid low with foul disease never shrink, but run all risks if love to God or man demand them of you. You will not die by a stray arrow from death’s quiver; the Lord alone can recall your breath. Your death is not left to chance; it is determined by a heavenly Father’s gracious will; therefore be not afraid. Be not so fearful of pain, or so anxious to preserve life, as to be held back where Jesus calls you on, for in such a case he that saveth his life shall lose it. You may not be reckless, and rush on danger without reason, that were madness; but you will, I trust, be brave and never fear to face death when the voice of God calls you into peril.

Moreover, how consoling is this truth; for, if the Father of our Lord Jesus arranges all, then our friends do not die untimely deaths. The beloved of the Lord are not cut off before their time; they go into Jesus’ bosom when they are ready to be received there. God has appointed the times for the ingathering of his fruits; some of them are sweet even in early spring, and he gathers them; others are as a basket of summer fruit, and he takes these

also while the year is young, while yet another company need to remain among us till autumn mellows them: each class shall be gathered in its season. Now of all this we are by no means competent judges. We know nothing, for we are infants of a day; God knoweth best. It were better that our friend should die, as die he did, than that he should live, else had he lived. Be sure of that. Yes, God has appointed the commencement, the continuance, and the conclusion of this mortal life.

But we must now consider the other translation of our text. It is generally given in the margin of the Bibles. "Is there not an appointed *warfare* to man upon earth?" which teaches us that *God has appointed life to be a warfare*. To all men it will be so, whether bad or good. Every man will find

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himself a soldier under some captain or another. Alas for those men who are battling against God and his truth, they will in the end be clothed with dishonor and defeat. I shall, however, speak mainly of the righteous, and truly their experience shows that life is one long struggle, from which we never cease till we hear the word, "Thy warfare is accomplished."

Brethren, life is a warfare, and therefore we are all men under authority.

No Christian is free to follow his own devices; we are all under law to Christ. A soldier surrenders his own will to that of his commander: his captain saith to him, "Go," and he goeth, or "Do this," and he doeth it.

Such is the Christian's life — a life of willing subjection to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. In consequence of this we have our place fixed and our order arranged for us, and our life's relative positions are all prescribed. A soldier has to keep rank and step with the rest of the line. He has a relation to the man on his right, and to his comrade on his left, and he bears a relation which he must not violate to each officer, and especially to his commander-in-chief. God has appointed to you, then, dear brother, to be a father or to be a son, to be a master or to be a servant, to be a teacher or to be taught; see that you keep your place. As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place. In our appointed warfare happy is the man who from first to last keeps in order with the forces of the Lord of hosts, and cheerfully fulfils the divine purposes.

As we have a warfare to accomplish, we must expect hardships. A soldier must not reckon upon ease. During a campaign he has neither house nor home. Perhaps last night he pitched his tent in a happy valley? but he must up and away, and his tent must to-morrow be exposed on the bleak mountain side. He has renounced the luxuries of life and the joys of repose. Forced marches, light slumbers, scant fare, and hard blows are his portion — he would be foolish to look for ease and enjoyment during a campaign. O ye sons of men, the Lord has appointed life to be a warfare; wherefore, then, do you wrap yourselves about with silken garments, and sew pillows for all arm-holes, and say to yourselves, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; eat, drink, and be merry"? Ye must not do so, and if the Lord by trial prevents your doing so ye must not quarrel with him, but must feel that such treatment must be expected in this war.

If life be a warfare, we must look for contests and struggles. The Christian

man must not expect to go to heaven without opposition. A soldier who never meets an enemy at all is not renowned. We count his valour light, and reckon him to be as some vain carpet knight “whose best delight is but  
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to wear a braid of his fair lady’s hair.” The man who is scarred and gashed, maimed and wounded, he is the hero to whom men pay homage. You must fight if you would reign. Your predecessors swam through seas of blood to win the crown; and, though the form of battle may be changed, yet the spirit of the enemy is unaltered; you must still contend against sin and bear up under trouble, for only through much tribulation will you inherit the kingdom of God.

It is a warfare, brethren, for all these reasons, and yet more so because we must always be upon the watch against danger. In a battle no man is safe. Where bullets fly, who can reckon upon life a moment? Brethren, the age is peculiarly dangerous. Perhaps every preacher before me has said as much, and every preacher after me will say the same for his times — yet still, I say, in this peculiar age there are a thousand perils for the soul, from superstition on the one hand and scepticism on the other; from rude selfreliance and indolent trust in others, from a wicked world and an apostate church. You must not wonder that it is so, for war is raging. The enemy has not laid down his weapons, the war drum is still beaten; therefore do not lay down your arms, but fight manfully for your King and country — for Christ and for his church.

Blessed be God that the text says “Is there not an *appointed* warfare?” Then, brethren, it is not our warfare, but one that God has appointed for us, in which he does not expect us to wear out our armor, or bear our own charges, or find our own rations, or supply our own ammunition. The armor that we wear we have not to construct, and the sword we wield we have not to fabricate. All things are ready for us. Our great Captain manages the commissariat with unquestioned skill and unbounded liberality. Yea, the warfare is so much his warfare that he is with us in it. The Greek soldiers, when they marched against the Persians, traversed many a weary league, but that which comforted them and made every man a hero was that Alexander marched when they marched. If he had been carried luxuriously, like the Persian monarch, while they were toiling over the hills and dales, they might have murmured, if he had been seen to drink of costly wines while they were parched with thirst, they might have complained. But Alexander, like a great commander as he was, marched in the ranks with his soldiers, so that they saw him faint and weary as they were, and wiping the sweat from his brow when they did the same; and when, as was his due, they brought him the first crystal draught they could obtain he put it on one side and said, “Give it to the sick soldiers, I will not  
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drink till every man can take a draught.” O glorious Jesus, surely thou hast done the same and more. Resistance thou hast borne even unto blood, thou hast known toil and agony, even to a sweat of gore, and suffering, and weakness, and self-denial thou too hast drank of; for thou sanest others,

thyself thou couldst not save. Courage, brother, then. Our warfare is of the Lord. Let us go forth to it, conquering and to conquer.

Thirdly. *The Lord has also determined the service of our life.* All men are servants to some master or another, neither can any of us avoid the servitude. The greatest men are only so-much the more the servants of others. The prime minister is only the first and most laborious of servants. The yoke upon the neck of the emperor is heavier than that which galls the shoulders of the serf. Despots are the most in bondage of all men. Happy will it be for us if through divine grace we have chosen Jesus for our Master and have become his servants for life: then indeed we are free, for his yoke is easy and his burden is light, and in learning of him we shall find rest unto our souls. If we are now the servants of the Lord Jesus, this life is a set time of a labor and apprenticeship to be worked out. I am bound by solemn indentures to my Lord and Master till my term of life shall run out, and I am right glad to have it so. Jacob, when he had served seven years was glad to serve seven more for the love of Rachel, and we for love of Jesus would serve seventy times seven if he desired it, but even then the longest term of life would have an end, even as ours also will. Here below our term is fixed, even as the days of an hireling.

Now, a servant who has let himself out for a term of years has not a moment that he can call his own, nor have any of us, if we are God's people. We have not a moment, no, not a breath, nor a faculty, nor a farthing that we may honestly reserve. We have transferred ourselves to Jesus Christ for ever, and we belong wholly to him. A servant does nothing of his own head, he does what his master tells him: this also is our condition. We have an appointed service, and we receive orders from our Lord, which orders are our law. A servant has his occupations prescribed; he may have to work indoors or outdoors, he may have to be near the house or far off in the field. He may be sent on errands, or bidden to stay at home but he does not choose his labor or the place of it, he accepts what is chosen for him by his superior. Are we not glad to have it so? Does not our heart say, "anything, everything for Jesus?" That should be our spirit. The servant, moreover, expects to be sometimes weary and spent, is it not natural? To a servant who applies for your situation, and says, 'I do not

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expect to work hard; I want large ravages and little work," you would say, "Yes, there are many of your mind, but I shall not employ one of the sort if I know it." Your Lord and Master thinks the same. You must expect to toil in his service till you are ready to faint, and then his grace will renew your strength.

A servant knows that his time is limited. If it is weekly service, he knows that his engagement may be closed on Saturday; if he is hired by the month, he knows how many days there are in a month, and he expects it to end; if he is engaged the year, he knows the day of the year when his service shall be run out. As for us, we do not know when our term will be complete; but we do know that conclude it will, therefore we would live in view of that conclusion. It is as well that the Lord has not told us when the appointed

end will be, or we might have loitered till near the close; but he has left that period unrevealed that we may be always laboring, and waiting for his coining. None the less is it sure that there is an appointed time, and our work will come to an end.

The hireling expects his wages; that is one reason for his industry. We, too, expect ours — not of debt truly, but of grace, yet still a gracious reward. God does not employ servants without paying them wages, as many of our merchants now do. His own children they are, and therefore they would be glad enough to serve without a hope of wage; but that is not God's way; he prefers that they also should have 'respect unto the recompense of reward.'" While the child's relationship shall be carried out with blessed liberality, so shall the servant's relation too, and wages shall be liberally given. Let us look forward, brethren and sisters; let us look forward to the great day when the Master shall call his servants together and give them their wages. The reward, if it were of debt, would be a very scanty one, and, in fact, it would be none at all, for we are unprofitable servants; but, the wages being of grace, there is room for giving every man his penny, room for giving to us exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think. There I leave the subject of service: it is all appointed for us, let us fulfill it.

**II.** Secondly, and briefly, THE INFERENCES TO BE DRAWN FROM THIS FACT. First, there is *Job's inference*. Job's inference was that as there was only an appointed time, and he was like a servant employed by the year, he might be allowed to wish for life's speedy close, and therefore he says — "As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and as an hireling looketh for

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the reward of his work." Job was right in a measure but not altogether so. There is a sense in which every Christian may look forward to the end of life with joy and expectancy, and may pray for it. I wish that some believers were in a state of mind which would fairly admit of their doing so. Many of us can heartily sympathise with the songster who penned the verses beginning —

*'I would not live always, I ask not to stay  
Where storm alter storm rises dark o'er the way;  
The few fleeting mornings that dawn on us here  
Are enough for life's sorrows, enough for its cheer.  
'Who, who would live always away from his God —  
Away from yon heaven, that blissful abode,  
Where rivers of pleasure flow o'er the bright plains,  
And the noontide of glory eternally reigns?'*

At the same time, there are needful modifications to this desire to depart, and a great many of them; for, first, it would be a very lazy thing for a servant to be always looking for Saturday night, and to be always sighing and groaning because the days are so long. The man who wants to be off to heaven before his life's work is done does not seem to me to be quite the man that is likely to go there at all; for he that is fit to go there and serve God, is one who is willing to stop here and do the same. Besides,

while our days are like those of a hireling, we serve a better master than other servants do. There are employers of such a kind that servants might be very glad never to see their faces any more, they are so sharp, so acid, so domineering, but our Master is love itself. Blessed be his name, his service is perfect freedom. We are never so happy and never so truly helping ourselves as when we are altogether serving him. For my part, I can say of him that I love my Master, I love his service, I love his house, I love his children, and I love everything about him; and if he were going to discharge me at the end of this life, I would beg him to let me live here for ever, for I could not bear to be dismissed. It is one of my dearest hopes in going to heaven that he will employ me still. Moreover, we are not like other servants, for this reason — that we are one with our Master, his brethren, his spouse, his body; and we are under such deep obligation to him that it is unspeakable joy to work for him. If he gave us no wages it would be wage enough to be allowed to wait upon him.

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***‘For why, O blessed Jesu Christ,  
Should I not love thee well?  
Not for the sake of winning heaven,  
Or of escaping hell.’***

But because of thy own sweetness, goodness, and dear love to me, ought I not to be thine for ever? Yes, yes; under some aspects you might feel that it was better to depart and be with Christ, but from other points of view you see differently, and check the wish, so that, like Paul, you are in a strait betwixt two, and which to choose you know not. It is a great mercy that the choice does not lie with you, all things are settled for you. Thus you see there are facts which modify Job’s inference, and forbid our excessive longing to close life’s weary day.

I will tell you *the devil’s inference*. The devil’s inference is that if our time, warfare, and service are appointed, there is no need of care, and we may cast ourselves down from the pinnacle of the temple, or do any other rash thing, for we shall only work out our destiny. So argues the arch-enemy, though he knows better. How many men have drawn most damnable conclusions from most blessed truths; and these men know, when they are doing it, that their conclusions are absurd. ‘Oh,’ say they, ‘we need not turn to Christ, for if we are ordained to eternal life we shall be saved.’ Yes, sirs, but why will you eat at mealtime to-day? Why do you eat at all? for if you are to live you will live. Why go to bed to-night? If you are ordained to sleep you will sleep. Why will you take down your shop shutters tomorrow and exhibit your goods, and try to sell them? If you are predestinated to be rich you will be rich. Ah, I see, you will not act the thing out. You are not such fools as you look; you are more knaves than fools, and your excuse is a piece of deceit. If it be not so, why not act upon it in daily life? He has a false heart who dares to suck out of the blessed truth of predestination the detestable inference that he may sit still and do nothing. Why, sirs, nothing in the world more nerves me for work than the belief that God’s purposes have appointed me to this service. Being

convinced that the eternal forces of immutable wisdom and unfailing power are at my back, I put forth all my strength as becometh a “worker together with God.” The bravest men that ever lived, like Cromwell and his Ironsides, believed in God’s decrees, but they also kept their powder dry. They relied upon everlasting purposes, but also believed in human responsibility, and so must you and I. Your years are appointed, but do not commit lewdness or drink with the drunken or you will shorten your days.

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Your warfare is appointed, O man, but do not go and play the fool, or your troubles will be multiplied. Your service is allotted you, O believer, but do not loiter, or you will grieve the Spirit of God and mar your work.

I will now give you *the sick man’s inference* — “Is there not an appointed time to men upon earth? Are not his days also like the days of an hireling?” The sick man, therefore, concludes that his pains will not last for ever, and that every suffering is measured out by love divine. Truly disease is a bitter draught, but Jehovah Rophi often prescribes it as a medicine for spiritual disease. When the Lord knows that the appointed affliction has wrought out all his purpose he will either raise up the patient to walk among the sons of men again or else he will take him to his bosom in glory. Wherefore, let him be patient, and in confidence and quietness shall be his strength.

Next comes *the mourner’s inference* — one which we do not always draw quite so readily as we should. It is this: “My child has died, but not too soon. My husband is gone; ah, God, what shall I do? Where shall my widowed heart find sympathy? Still he has been taken away at the right time. The Lord has done as it pleased him, and he has done wisely.” If you have not yet come to mourning over the dead, but have every day to sympathise with a living sufferer who is gradually melting away amidst wearisome pain and constant anguish, ask grace to enable you to feel “It is well.” It is a grand triumph of grace when the heart is neither stoical, unsympathetic, nor rebellious; when you can grieve but not rebel in the grieving, mourn without murmuring, and sorrow without sinning. Pray for some who have this trial. Pray for them that grace may be perfect in their weakness.

Furthermore, let us draw *the healthy man’s inference*. Do you know what inference I have drawn from the sudden death of my friend? I thought — in a moment it struck me — “Ah, if I had died last Saturday afternoon instead of Mr. Henry Olney, should I have left all the concerns that I have in hand quite in order?” I have no end of business — too much a great deal; and I resolved “I will get all square and trills as if I were going off, for perhaps I am.” Dear brother, I want you to feel the same. You are a healthy man, but be prepared to die. Have your will made and your accounts squared, and fit for your successor to take up. What thou doest do quickly! Have your will made, and if you are wealthy do not forget the Lord’s work. Mr. Whitfield used to say, “I could not sleep at night if I had left my gloves out of their

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place, for,” said he, “I would leave everything in order.” Trim the ship,

brother, for you know not what weather is coming. Clear the decks for action, for no one knows when the last enemy will be in sight. Your best friend is coming, make ready for his entertainment. Be as a bride adorned for her husband, and not as a slattern who would be ashamed to be seen. Lastly, there is *the sinner's inference*. "My time, my warfare, and my service are appointed, but what have I done in them. I have waged a warfare against God, and have served in the pay of the devil, what will the end be?" Sinner, you will run your length, you will fulfill your day to your black master; you will fight his battle and earn your pay, but what will the wages be? The end cometh, and the wage-paying, are you ready to reap what you have sowed? Having taken sides with the devil against yourself and against your God, are you prepared for the result? Look to it, I pray you, and beseech the Lord, through Jesus Christ, to give you grace to escape from your present position and enlist on the side of Christ. I ask you, sirs, who are sitting in this gallery here, and who have not believed in Jesus, and ye men and women all over this building who are unregenerate, if instead of the decease of the brother who has fallen I had to speak of your death, where must you have been? We are not among those who would have read a hypocritical service over you and thanked God that you were taken if you died in sin. We would not have insulted the Most High by saying that we ourselves hoped to die in that fashion. We dare not so have blasphemed the majesty of heaven. You know we should have laid you into the grave very silently with many a tear more salt than usual, because deep down in our spirit there would have been that dreary thought, "He died impenitent. He died unregenerate. He is lost! he is lost!" Weep not for our brother, smitten in his prime, whose children mourn him! Weep not for him, though his sorrowing wife bends o'er his corpse, and cannot persuade herself that his spirit is gone! Weep not for him, but weep for those who have died and are lost for ever, driven from the presence of God! In their eternal warfare there will be no discharge, and in their dreadful slavery there will be no end, for there is no appointed time for man when once he leaves this earth. Time is over, and the angel who puts one foot upon the sea, and another upon the land, swears by the Eternal that time shall be no more, and the condition of the lost spirit is finally settled, settled for ever. Beware, therefore, and be wise, for Christ's sake and your own. Amen.

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**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Job 7.**

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" — 90, 851, 839.**

## **“AM I A SEA, OR A WHALE?”**

NO. 2206

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,**



**MAY 31ST, 1891,**

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON  
BEHALF OF THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN SAILORS' SOCIETY,  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 7TH, 1891.**

*“Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me?” — Job 7:12.*

JOB was in great pain when he thus bitterly complained. These moans came from him when his skin was broken and had become loathsome and he sat upon a dunghill and scraped himself with a potsherd. We wonder at his patience, but we do not wonder at his impatience. He had fits of complaining, and failed in that very patience for which he was noted. Where God's saints are most glorious, there you will find their spots. The weaknesses of the saints lie near their strength. Elijah is the bravest of the brave, and flees from Jezebel; Moses is the meekest of the meek, and speaks in passion; Job is the most patient of men, and cries, ‘I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.’ As part of his bitter complaint, he said, “Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me?”

He seemed to be watched and whipped, and then watched again. It seemed to him that God concentrated all his strength upon him in afflicting him. He was beaten black and blue; and whereas other culprits had forty stripes save one, he had fifty stripes save none. He was spared no suffering, and he cries at last, ‘I am watched, and checked, as if I were a great sea needing always to be held in bounds or a terrible sea-monster wanting always a hook in its jaws. Lord, why dost thou harass me thus? I am such a poor,

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insignificant thing, that it seems out of thy usual way to be so rough upon one so feeble. The raging ocean, or the mighty leviathan, may need such watching, but why dost thou spend it on me? Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me?”

I shall not moor myself to Job's sense of the words; but I shall spread my sail for a voyage further out to sea. This sort of talk may have been used by many a man who is now within hail of my voice — may have been used by sailors now before me.

Let me point out the channel along which I shall steer in my discourse. We shall begin by saying that *some men seem to be narrowly watched by God*. They think that the Lord's eye is as much fixed on them as though they were great as a sea, or huge as a whale. My second point will be, that *they do not like this watching*. They complain about it, and wish they could get rid of it. Therefore they argue against it with God. Our third head is, that *their argument is a bad one*. They think they are very hardly done by; but the fact is, that *all they complain of is in love*. See, my mess-mates, the way I shall try to steer; but if the heavenly wind blows me out of my course, don't be surprised if I tack about, and go nobody knows where.

**I.** I have, first, to say that **SOME MEN SEEM TO BE SPECIALLY TRACKED AND WATCHED BY GOD.** We hear of persons being “shadowed” by the police, and certain people feel as if they were shadowed by God; they are mysteriously tracked by the great Spirit, and they know and feel it. Wherever they go, an eye is upon them, and they cannot hide from it. They are like prisoners under arrest — they can never go out of reach of the law. They cannot get away from God, do what they may. There are men who have been in this condition for years; *and they know what I mean.* All men are really surrounded by God. He is not far from every one of us. “In him we live, and move, and have our being.” “Whither shall we flee from thy presence?” to the heights above, or to the depths beneath? to oceans frozen into ice, or seas whereon the sun shines with burning heat? In vain we rise or dive to escape from God. “Thou God seest me”, is as true in the watches of the night as in the blaze of day. God is with us, and we are always beneath his eye. Yet there are certain people to whom this is more clear than it is to others.

*Some are singularly aware of the presence of God.* Certain of us never were without a sense of God. As children, we could not go to sleep till we

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said, “Our Father which art in heaven.” As youths, we trembled if we heard God’s holy name blasphemed. As men, engaged in the cares of life, we have seen the Lord’s goodness, all along. We delight to see him in every flower that blooms, and to hear his voice in every wind that blows. It has made us happy to see God in his works. “The fool hath said in his heart, No God”; but this folly we never cared for. We knew that God was good, even when we felt we had offended him. He has taught us from our youth, and manifested himself to us. Softly has the whisper fallen on our ear, “God is near thee: God is with thee: God hath an ear to hear thee: God hath a heart to love thee: God hath a hand to help thee.” I have known those who, even when they have sinned and gone against their consciences, have never at any time quite lost a sense of the nearness of God, even though its only fruit was fear — a fear which hath torment.

With others God’s watch is seen in a different way. They feel that they are watched by God, because *their conscience never ceases to rebuke them.* The voice of conscience is not pitched to the same key in all men; neither is it equally loud in all people. Conscience can be made like a muzzled dog, and then it cannot bite the thief of sin. Conscience can grow like a man with a cold, who has lost his voice. But it is not so with all men, even after years of sin. Some have a naturally tender conscience, and while living in sin they are never easy. They make merry all the day, for “they count it one of the wisest things to drive dull care away”; but dull care, like the chickens, comes home to roost at night. The sailor in company is jolly; but if he has to keep a lone watch beneath the silent stars his heart begins to beat, and his conscience begins to call him to account for the follies of the day. He starts in his sleep; he dreams over his past sin and the judgment to come; for conscience will wake even when the rest of the man sleeps. “You

were wrong”, says conscience; and his voice is very solemn. Even great sin in certain men has not prevented conscience speaking out honestly to them. Again and again the inward monitor cries, “You were wrong, and you will suffer for it.” We read that “David’s heart smote him”: the heart deals us an ugly knock. When the blow is within us it tells. I am addressing some who, though they do not feel pleased about it, yet must know that there is a something within that will not let them sin cheaply. God has a bit in their mouths, and a bridle upon their jaws; and every now and then he gives a tug at it, and pulls them right up. They are not at home in sin. They have not yet got their sea-legs upon the ocean of vice. They sing the songs of the devil with a quake and a shake, which shows that the  
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music does not suit them. Thus God has set a watch upon them: they carry a detective in their bosoms.

In some this watching has gone farther, for *they are under solemn conviction of sin*. They are convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come. God’s custom-house officer has boarded them, and their smuggling is found out. I remember when I was in that state myself — a criminal who dared not deny his guilt, but dreaded punishment. I would not go back to that condition for a hundred worlds. Then there was no rest for me. I was only a youth; but boyish sports lost their relish for me, because I knew that I was a sinner, and that God must punish sin. I awoke in the morning, and my first act for many a day was to read a chapter of the Bible, or a page of some arousing book, which kept my conscience still awake. The Holy Spirit put me in irons, and there I lay both day and night. My bed was at times a very weary place to me, because the eyes of God’s anger seemed to be ever watching me. I knew I had offended God, and I had not yet found out the way of reconciliation by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Now, it may be that I speak to some here, who have been to the ends of the earth, and they have said, “Well, when we get away where the Sabbath bell is never heard, we shall get rid of these fears, and take our swing in sin.” They sailed off, and as soon as they reached port, they hurried to a place of vicious amusement, where no one knew them. But the dog of fear howled at their heels, and merriment seemed mockery to them. On the lone ocean the very stars pierced their hearts with their rays. At length their mess-mates began to notice it and call them Old Sobersides. “Jack, what ails you?” was the frequent question; and well it might be, for Jack was very heavy, and it is hard to be merry with a broken heart. In some such fashion as this the man feels that God has set a watch upon him, and that he has become like a sea which never rests, or a whale which roams the waste of water, and knows no home. God watched him; and though he would gladly have run the blockade, he could not find an hour in which his vessel was left alone.

Certain men are not only plagued by conscience and dogged by fear, but *the providence of God seems to have gone out against them*. Just when the man had resolved to have a bout of drinking, he fell sick of a fever, and had

to go to the hospital. He was going to a dance; but he became so weak that he had not a leg to stand upon. He was forced to toss to and fro on the

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bed, to quite another tune from that which pleases the ball-room. He had yellow fever, and was long in pulling round. God watched him, and put the skid on him just as he meant to have a break-neck run downhill. The man gets better, and he says to himself, "I will have a good time now." But then he is out of berth, and perhaps he cannot get a ship for months, and he is brought down to poverty. "Dear me!" he says, "everything goes against me. I am a marked man"; and so he is. Just when he thinks that he is going to have a fair wind, a tempest comes on and drives him out of his course, and he sees rocks ahead. After a while he thinks, "Now I am all right. Jack is himself again, and piping times have come." A storm hurries up; the ship goes down, and he loses all but the clothes he has on his back. He is in a wretched plight: a shipwrecked mariner, far from home. God seems to pursue him even as he did Jonah. He carries with him misfortune for others, and he might well cry, "Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me?" Nothing prospers. His tacklings are loosed; he cannot well strengthen his mast; his ship leaks; his sails are rent; his yards are snapped; and he cannot make it out. Other people seem to get on, though they are worse than he is. Time was when he used to be lucky too; but now he has parted company with success, and carries the black flag of distress. He is driven to and fro by contrary winds; he makes no headway; he is a miserable man, and would wish that the whole thing would go to the bottom, only he dreads a place which has no bottom, from which there is no escape, if once you sink into it. The providence of God runs hard against him, and thus he sees himself to be a watched man.

Yes, and God also watches over many *in the way of admonition*. Wherever they go, holy warnings follow them. They cannot escape from those who would be friends to their souls. They seem to be surrounded with a ring of prayers and sermons and holy talks. The boy said, "If I could get away from my mother I should be free! I have been tied long enough to her apron strings. I am old enough to do as I like. If I can get away from my father's chidings and prayings, I shall have a fine time of it." So the boy ran away and went to sea; and when he got on board, a good old sailor tackled him, and talked to him about his soul; and then another pleaded with him. The boy said to himself, "Why, I have got out of the frying -pan into the fire. I came here to be out of the way of religion and here it is!" I have known a sailor to go from port to port, and wherever he has landed there has been some gracious man or woman waiting to lead him to Christ. May it be often so! May the Bethel flag be found flying in all waters, till every

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runaway says, "Why, I am watched wherever I go!" May it be as it was with our dear friends Fullerton and Smith on board the steamboat! Mr. Fullerton spoke to a rough man, and asked him if he was saved; and the man was angry, cross, vexed, and went to the other side of the vessel. There he complained to Mr. Smith, "That man over there asked me if I was

saved; he is a fool!” “Very likely”, said Smith; “but then, you see, he is a fool for Christ. I think it is better to be a fool for Jesus than to be wise for the devil.” He began to plead with him, when the man cried out, “There is a regular gang of them; I cannot go anywhere but they are on to me.” It has been made hot for some of you by the British and Foreign Sailors’ Society, which has placed missionaries in so many ports. “There’s a gang of them”, and wherever you go you stumble on an earnest Christian man, who will not let you alone. If I could stir up Christian people here, I would make it hard for sinners, so that wherever they went they would find a hand outstretched to stop them from going to destruction. Oh, that each one might be met with tears and entreaties; that thus each one might be snatched from the waves of fire and landed on the rock of salvation! Some here present have had to dodge a great deal to keep out of the way of gospel shots. Their track has been followed by mercy, and they have been pursued by swift cruisers of grace. They have been like fish taken in a net — surrounded on all sides, and neither able to pass through the meshes, nor to break the net, nor to leap out of it. Oh, that the net of Christ’s love may so entangle; you all, that you may be his for ever! That is our first point: there are some men who seem specially watched of God.

**II.** Secondly, we notice that **THEY ARE VERY APT TO DISLIKE THIS WATCHING.** Job is not pleased with it. He asks, “Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me?” These people, to whom God pays such attention, are foolish enough to murmur that they are so hedged in, and they are vexed to be made to feel that God has his eye upon them. Do you know what they would like? *They want liberty to sin.* They would like to be let loose, and to be allowed to do just as their wild wills would suggest to them. They would cast off every restraint and have their fling of what the world calls ‘pleasure.’ They would climb from sin to sin, hand over hand. They would like to empty all the cups on the devil’s sideboard, and be as merry as the worst of men when they are taking it free and easy. That is why they would send their consciences to sleep, drown their fears,

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and escape from chastening providences and warning admonitions. They would like to live where no Christian person would ever worry them again with wearisome exhortation. They demand liberty: liberty to put their hand into the fire! liberty to ruin themselves! liberty to leap into hell before their time! Liberty! what destruction has been wrought in thy name! Free thinking! Free living! Free loving and all that! What misuse of terms! What a libel upon the name of freedom, to use the word “free” in connection with the slavery of sin! Yet, I am speaking to some who say, “That is just what I want. I want to cut myself clear of all this hamper which blocks me up from having my own way.” Ah me! this is the cry of a man who is bent on soul-suicide!

*They wish also that they could be as hard of heart as many others are.* Some men can drink any quantity, and yet do not seem as if they were

greatly affected by it; and many a young sailor has wished that he could pour down his grog without a wink, after the style of the old toper. He meets with a foul-mouthed being who can swear till all is blue, while he himself has only dropped an oath or two, and then felt wretched. The young man begins to wish that he was as tough as old Jack, and as much a dare-devil as he. The hardened profligate is foolishly envied, and looked upon as a man of "pluck." But is it true bravery to ruin one's soul? Is it manly to be wicked? Is it a great gain to have a seared conscience? We don't envy the blind because they cannot see danger, nor the deaf because they cannot hear an alarm; and why envy the hardened old sinner because he has become spiritually blind and deaf? There are monsters, both on land and on sea, whose very breath is pestilent, and whose talk is enough to choke up a town with vice; and yet certain young men, whom God will not allow to descend into such rottenness, are almost angry that they are restrained. A tender conscience is a great possession, but these simple ones know not its value. They wish that they could have a heart as hard as the nether millstone. Ah, poor souls! you know not what you wish; for you have no idea how deep is the curse that lies in a callous conscience. When God gave Pharaoh up to hardness of heart, it was a tremendous punishment for his pride and cruelty; and, short of hell, there is no judgment that God can inflict like letting a man have his own way. "Let him alone", says God, "he is joined to idols"; and if the Lord says that, there is only one other word more dreadful, and that is the final sentence, — "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." O you beginners in vice who cannot yet stifle the cries of

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your suffering consciences, I pray that you may see your folly, and no longer do violence to your own mercy.

Men do not like this being surrounded by God — this wearing the bit and kicking strap — because *they would drop God from their thoughts*. If tomorrow we could hear, by telegram from heaven, that God was dead, what crowds would buy the newspaper! It would be the greatest relief in the world to many a godless wretch if he could feel sure that there was no God. To some of us this news would be death: we should have lost our Father, our Comforter, our Savior, our all. Alas! many wish that there were no God; and if they cannot persuade themselves that there is none — and it is very hard for a sailor to do that — yet they try to forget him. If God is out of mind, he is as good as out of the world to the careless sinner. When God comes with inward fears, and awakens conscience, and sends cross providences, so that the man feels pulled up and made to pause; then he knows that there is a God, for he feels a power which works against his sin, from which he cannot get away. He longs to be clear of this secret force; but it wraps him about on every side. He does not read his Bible, and yet Scripture rises in his memory. It is long since he bent his knee in prayer; he has almost forgotten what his mother said to him when she lay a-dying; but still he feels that there is a God, and, somehow, that belief sounds a trumpet blast through his soul, summoning him to his last account. Come

to judgment! Come to judgment! Come to judgment! The call rings in his ears, and he cannot get away from the terrible sound. Then it is that he cries “Why am I thus? Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me?”

Once more, there are some who do not like to be shadowed in this way, because *they want to have their will with others*. Shall I speak a sharp word, like a two-edged sword? There are men — and seamen to be found among them — who are not satisfied with being ruined themselves, but they thirst to ruin others. They lay traps for precious souls, and they are vexed that their victims should escape them. They are angry because certain poor women are not altogether in their power. Woe unto the men who lead women astray! I have heard of sailors who, in every port they enter, try to ruin others. I charge you to remember that you will have to face these ruined ones at the day of judgment. You sailed away, and they never knew where you went; but the Lord knew. It may be, when you lie in hell, eyes will find you out, and a voice will cry aloud, “Are you here? You are the man that led me to perdition!” You will have to keep everlasting

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company with those whom you dragged down to hell; and these will for ever curse you to your face. I say there are men who would like to have full license to commit wantonness, and they are grieved that they are hindered in their carnival of sin. May God grant that you may be stopped altogether; and instead of lusting to pollute others, may you have a desire to save them! May God grant that the channel of evil may be blocked for you, and may you be piloted into the waters of repentance and faith! This is why some kick against God. I fear these people will be much vexed with me for speaking so plainly; but you must not think that it will alarm me should you be angry. I am rather glad when fellows get angry with my preaching. “Oh”, I say to myself, “those fish feel the hook in their jaws, and so they struggle to escape.” Of course a fish does not like the hook which lays hold of him. These angry hearers will come again. You people with whom the sermon goes in at one ear and out at the other, you get no good whatever; but a man who fires up with wrath, and says, “How dare that fellow speak thus to me?” is sure to listen again; and it is very likely that God will bless him. But whether it offends you or pleases you — I repeat my warning — I charge you, do not drag others down to hell with you. If you must go there yourselves, seek not to destroy those around you. Do not teach boys to drink, and to swear; neither tempt frail women to commit uncleanness with you. God help you to shake off all vice; for I know that vile habits are often the reason why men kick against the restraint of God’s loving hand.

**III.** And now I have got to the very heart of my text. The third part is this — that THIS ARGUMENT AGAINST THE LORD’S DEALINGS IS A VERY BAD ONE. Job says, “Am I a sea, or whale, that thou settest a watch over me?” Listen. *To argue from our insignificance is poor pleading*; for the little things are just those against which there is most need to watch. If you were

a sea, or a whale, God might leave you alone; but as you are a feeble and sinful creature, which can do more hurt than a sea, or a whale, you need constant watching. In life, men fall by very little things. One does not need to watch against his dog one half so much as against a horse-fly, or a mosquito, for these will sting you when you least expect it. The little things want most watching, therefore it is poor reasoning when we complain that God watches us as if we were a sea, or a whale.

After all, *there is not a man here who is not very like a sea*, or a seamonster in this respect, that he needs a watch to be set over him. A man's

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heart is as changeable and as deceitful as the sea. To-day it is calm as a sea of glass, unruffled by a breath of air. Oh, trust not yourself upon it, for before to-morrow's sun is up, your nature may be rolling in tremendous billows of passion. You cannot trust the sea, but it is more worthy of confidence than your heart. Here you are to-night, and oh, how good you look as you sit and listen, and then stand up and sing! Ah, my men! I should not like to hear you if you take to blaspheming your Maker, as many do. When you are down in the fore-castle with a little band of praying men, how very good you feel! Let us see you when you are on shore, and there is plenty of grog about. It is easy to have a calm sea when there is no wind, but how different is the ocean when a gale is blowing! We are all very well when far away from temptation, but how are we when the devil's servants are around us? Then, I fear, that too often good resolutions prove to be

*'False as the smooth, deceitful sea,  
And empty as the whistling wind.'*

It may be that I speak to one who has undergone a dreadful change. Once you led others in the way of righteousness, but now you draw them into evil. Once you sailed under the Bethel flag, but now the old Pirate of the infernal lake is your captain. You have gone back to your old ways, and have again become the slave of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Your religious profession had no foundation. Ah me! you need not say, "Am I a sea, or a whale?" for seas and sea-monsters are more to be trusted than you are. The sea is immeasurable; and, as for you, your sinfulness is unsearchable. Your capacity is almost without measure: your mind reaches far, and touches all things. Man's mind can rise in rebellion against the God of the whole earth, till, like the raging waves of the sea, it threatens to put out the lights of heaven. When man is in a rebellious state he will rage in his thoughts as though he would wash away the shores of heaven, and beat like the surf upon the iron rocks of hell. A man is an awful mystery of iniquity when left to himself. You cannot fathom his pride, nor measure his daring. Deep down in his mind there are creeping things innumerable, both small and great beasts; for all manner of evils and sins multiply in the heart like fishes in the sea. Do not say, "Am I a sea, or a sea-monster, that thou settest a watch over me?" for the Lord may answer, "You are more capacious for evil than a sea, and more wild than a sea-monster."

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I shall now go further, and show that, by reason of our evil nature, *we have become like the sea*. This is true in several ways; for, first, *the sea is restless, and so is our nature*. “The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” You need not go far to find hearts always agitated; always seeking rest, and finding none. They know not Christ; and until they do know him, they cannot rest. They are always seeking a something; they know not what. They run first in one direction, and then in another, but they never follow the right thing. When they are thoughtful no good comes of their thoughts. Their waters cast up — what? Pearls and corals? No; “mire and dirt.” I do not need to explain those words. If any of you have to keep company with these restless beings, you know how foul-mouthed they can be. They cast up worse things than mire and dirt when they are stirred up. Oh, say not, “Am I a sea, or a whale?” Think of yourself as being as restless as a whale when the harpoon is in him; as restless as the sea when a storm is moving its lowest depths.

Let us say, next, that *the sea can be furious and terrible, and so can ungodly men*. When a man is in a fury, what a wild beast he can be! A landsman looks on the sea when it has put on its best behavior, and he says, “I should not mind going a voyage. It must be splendid to steam over such a sea! I feel I shall make a splendid sailor.” Let him look at that same ocean by-and-by. Where is the sea of glass now? Where are the gentle waves, which seemed afraid to ripple too far upon the sand? The sea roars and rages and raves. The Atlantic in a storm is terrible; but have you ever seen a tempest in a man’s nature? It is an awful sight, and one which causes gracious eyes to weep. What a miserable object is a man with the drink in him! He was as decent a fellow as one could talk with; but now that the drink has mastered him the devil has come on board, and you will do well to give him a wide berth. The same is true of passion. Concerning angry men our advice would be, “Put not to sea in a storm, neither argue with a man in a passion.” You do not know what he will do, and he does not know himself. Such a man will be grieved enough when he sobers down; but meanwhile, while the storm is on, he cares for nothing. His eyes flash lightning, his face is black as tempest, his mouth foams, and his tongue rages. In his case, “The sea roars, and the fullness thereof.” When you feel the Lord’s restraint, you need not ask, “Am I a sea, or a whale?” for your own heart may answer, “You can be more furious than the sea itself.”

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Think, again, *how unsatisfied is the sea*. It draws down and swallows up stretches of land and thousands of tons of cliff, but it is not filled up. “All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full.” Huge Spanish galleons went to the bottom, with thousands of gold and silver pieces on board; but the sea was never the richer. When, on some dreadful night, our coasts are strewn with wrecks, and hundreds of lives are lost, the devouring deep is never the more satisfied. The sea is a hungry monster, which could swallow a navy, and then open its mouth for more. Are not many men made of the

same craving sort? If you gave them half a world they would cry for the other half; and if they had the whole round globe they would weep for the stars. Man's mind never rests in sweet content till God himself satisfies it with himself. O man, without true religion it is your fate to go for ever hungering and thirsting; or, like the sea, yeasting and foaming, after you know not what.

*Human nature is like the sea for mischief.* How destructive is the ocean, and how unfeeling! It makes widows and orphans by the thousand, and then smiles as if it had done nothing! Terrible havoc it can work when once its power is let loose! Do not talk of the destructiveness of the sea; let the reckless sinner think of the destructiveness of his own life. You that are living in sin, and in vice, what wrecks you have caused! How many who set out on the voyage of life, and bade fair to make a splendid passage, have gone upon the rocks *through you!* A foul word, a loose song, a filthy act, and a gay craft has become a wreck. Conscience can fill in the details. Ah me! one cannot say to God, "Am I a sea, or a sea monster?" or he might well reply, "No shark has devoured so many as the drunkard in his cups, the swearer in his presumption, and the unclean in his lust!" Ah me! I could weep to think how much of mischief any one of you who are unconverted may yet do! The Lord deliver you from being left derelict, to cause wreck to others!

We must not forget that *we are less obedient to God than the sea is.*

Nothing keeps back the sea from many a shore but a belt of sand; and though it rages in storm and tempest, the sea goes back in due time and leaves the sand for children to play upon. It knows its bounds and keeps them. When the time comes for the tide to rise, the obedient waters march upon the shore in unbroken ranks, and fill up every creek. They do not linger behind their time. When the moment comes to stay where they are, they rest at flood. Then comes the instant to begin the ebb, and no matter how boisterous the waves may be, they fall back at God's bidding. What,

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after all, is more orderly than the great sea? Would to God we were like it in this! How readily this great creature yields! A little wind springs up, and its waves answer at once to the breath of heaven. When the sun crosses the line, the equinoctial gales know their season; while at all times the great currents cease not the flow which God has appointed them. The sea is obedient to the Lord, and so was that great fish of which we read just now: "The Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land." As for us, we refuse to obey; and when left to ourselves, what law can restrain us? Is there anything in heaven or earth which a proud sinner will not venture to attempt? God blocks up the road to hell with hedge, and ditch, and chain; but we break over them. He digs a trench across our way, and we leap over it. He piles a mountain in the road, and as if our feet were like hinds' feet, we leap upon the high places of presumption. A man will go against wind and tide in his determination to be lost. O sea! O sea! thou art but a child with thy father, as compared with the wicked and rebellious heart of man! It is a bad argument, then. We need to be looked after. We

need to be watched. We need to be kept in check, even more than a sea or a whale. We need the restraining providence and constraining grace of God to keep us from deadly sin.

**IV.** Last of all, I would remark that ALL THEY COMPLAINED OF WAS SENT IN LOVE. They said, "Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me?" but if they had known the truth they would have blessed God with all their hearts for having watched over them as he has done. First, God's restraint of some of us *has kept us from self-ruin*. If the Lord had not held us in we might have been in prison; we might have been in the grave; we might have been in hell! Who knows what would have become of us? An old Scotchman said to Mr. Rowland Hill, what I am quite sure would have been as true of me. He looked into Mr. Hill's face so keenly and so often, that at last good Rowland asked him, "Why are you looking at my face so much?" "I was thinking", said the Scotchman, "that if you had not been converted by the grace of God, you would have been a terrible sinner." And, surely, this would have been my case. Nothing half-and-half would have contented me. I should have gone to the end of my tether. Is not the same true of some of you? How many times has the Lord laid his own hand on us to stay us from a fatal step! If we were checked in our youth, and brought there and then to Jesus, it was a gracious deed on God's part. If we have been hindered during a sinful manhood, and have at length been made to bow before the will of the Lord, this also is great

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grace. Left to ourselves, we should have chosen our own destruction. Do you not think that God's taking you apart, and giving you a tender conscience, and admonishing you so often, proves his great love to you. Surely someone has prayed for you. There is a mother here to-night. I hope she will not mind my telling you what she did last Tuesday when I was sitting in my vestry. She brought me a little brown paper parcel with £50 in it, and she gave it for the British and Foreign Sailors' Society. She has a son whom she has not heard of for years. He went to sea, and she cannot find him, or get any tidings of his whereabouts; but she hopes that a missionary of this Society may meet him in some strange place, and bring him to the Savior. She prays that it may be so, and, therefore, she brings her self-sacrificing offering — a great sum, I am sure, for her — that she may help to support the good Society which, she hopes, may be a blessing to her boy. There are other sailors to whom God's love is seen in their being followed up by a mother's pleadings. Ah, friend! the Lord would not have checked you so if he had not intended to bless you. That broken leg of yours is to keep you from running too far into sin. That yellow fever was sent to cool the fever of your sin. Your missing that ship caused you to miss shipwreck and death. These mishaps were all tokens of love to you. The Lord would not let you perish. He resolves to save you. You are one of his chosen. Christ bought you with his blood, and he means to have you for his own. If you will not come to him with a gentle breeze he will fetch you by a storm. Yield to the pressure of his love. If you will be as the horse

and the mule, which have no understanding, he will break you in and manage you with bit and bridle; but it would be far better if you would be ruled by love.

I think I see tokens of electing love upon you in those very things which you have kicked against. The Lord is working to bring you to himself, and to himself you must come. The prodigal son was driven home by stress of weather. If his father had had the doing of it, he could not have worked the matter better. His hungry belly and his pig-feeding fetched him home. The unkindness of the citizens of the far country helped to hurry him back to his father. Hardship, and want, and pain, are meant to bring you back, and God has used them to that end; and the day will come when you will say, "I bless God for the rough wave which washed me on shore. I bless God for the stormy providence which drowned my comfort, but saved my soul." Once more, and I have done. *God will not always deal roughly with you.* Perhaps to-night he will say his last sharp word. Will you yield to softer

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means? They say that oil poured on troubled waters will make them smooth: God the Holy Ghost can send to your troubled soul a lifelong calm. The winds and waves on the Galilean sea all went to sleep in an instant. How? Why, when Jesus came walking on the water he said to the warring elements, "Be still." The waves crouched like whipped dogs at his feet, though they had roared like lions before. He said to the winds, "Hush!" and they breathed as softly as the lips of a babe. Jesus is here at this hour. He that died on Calvary looks down on us: believe on him. He lifts his pierced hands, and cries, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." Will you not look to him? Oh, that his grace may lead you at once to say, "He is all in all to me!" Here is a soul -saving text for you: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Accept the Savior; and though you be as a sea, or as a whale, you shall no longer complain of the Lord's watching you, but you shall rejoice in perfect liberty. He is free who loves to serve his God. He makes it his delight that he is watched of the Lord. The Lord bless sailors! May we all meet in the Fair Havens! May the flag of your Society bless every sea, because God blesses its missionaries! I wish for it the utmost prosperity, and I judge it to be worthy of the most generous aid of all Christian men. In all respects it is exactly to my mind. The Lord send prosperity to it! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — *Jonah 2.***

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"**

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# WHY SOME SINNERS ARE NOT PARDONED.

NO. 2705

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*“And why dost thou not pardon my transgression,  
and take away mine iniquity?” — Job 7:21.*

NO man should, rest, until he is sure that his sin is forgiven. It may be forgiven, and he may be sure that it is forgiven; and he ought not to give rest to his eyes, nor slumber to his eyelids, till he has been assured, with absolute certainty, that his transgression is pardoned, and that his iniquity is taken away. You, dear friends, may be patient under suffering, but not patient under sin. You may ask for healing with complete resignation to the will of God as to whether he will grant it to you; but you should ask for pardon with importunity, feeling that you must have it. You may not be sure that it is God's will to deliver you from disease, but you may be quite certain that it is his will to hear you when you cry to him to save you from sin. And if, at your first crying unto him, you are not saved, seek to know the reason why he is refusing to grant you the boon you so much desire. It is quite legitimate to put this question to God again and again, “Why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity?” We ought also to press this matter home upon our own heart and conscience, to see whether we cannot discover the reason why pardon is for a while withheld from us, for God never acts arbitrarily and without reason; and, depend upon it, if we diligently search by the light of the candle of the

Lord, we shall be able to find an answer to this question of Job, “Why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity?” Job’s question may sometimes be asked by a child of God; but it may be more frequently asked by others who, as yet, are not brought consciously into the Lord’s family.

**I.** I shall first take our text as A QUESTION THAT MAY BE ASKED, AS IN JOB’ S CASE, BY A TRUE CHILD OF GOD: “Why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity?”

Sometimes, beloved friends, this question is asked under a misapprehension. Job was a great sufferer; and although he knew that he was not as guilty as his troublesome friends tried to make out, yet he did fear that possibly, his great afflictions were the results of some sin; and, therefore, he came before the Lord with this sorrowful enquiry, “Why dost thou continue to me all this pain and agony? If it be caused by sin, why dost thou not first pardon the sin, and then remove its effects?”

Now I take it that it would have been a misapprehension on Job’s part *to suppose that his afflictions were the result of his sin*. Mark you, brethren, we are, by nature, so full of sin that we may always believe that there is enough evil within us to cause us to suffer severe affliction if God dealt with us according to justice; but do recollect that, in Job’s case, the Lord’s object, in his afflictions and trials, was not to punish Job for his sin, but to display in the patriarch, to his own honor and glory, the wonders of his grace by enabling Job, with great patience, still to hold on to God under the direst suffering, and to triumph in it all. Job was not being punished; he was being honored. God was giving to him a name like that of the great ones of the earth. The Lord was lifting him up, promoting him, putting him into the front rank, making a great saint of him, causing him to become one of the fathers and patterns in the ancient Church of God. He was really doing for Job such extraordinarily good things that you or I, in looking back upon his whole history, might well say, “I would be quite content to take Job’s afflictions if I might also have Job’s grace, and Job’s place in the Church of God.”

It may happen to you, beloved, that you think that your present affliction is the result of some sin in you, yet it may be nothing of the kind. It may be that the Lord loves you in a very special manner because you are a fruitbearing branch, and he is pruning you that you may bring forth more fruit.

As Rutherford said to a dear lady, in his day, who had lost several of her

children, “Your ladyship is so sweet to the Well -beloved that he is jealous on your account, and is taking away from you all the objects of your earthly love that he may absorb the affection of your whole heart into himself.” It was the very sweetness of the godly woman’s character that led her Lord to act as he did towards her, and I believe that there are some of the children of God who are now suffering simply because they are gracious. There are certain kinds of affliction that come only upon the more eminent members of the family of God; and if you are one of those

who are thus honored, instead of saying to your Heavenly Father, "When wilt thou pardon my sin?" you might more properly say, "My Father, since thou hast pardoned mine iniquity, and adopted me into thy family, I cheerfully accept my portion of suffering, since in all this, thou art not bringing to my mind the remembrance of any unforgiven sin, for I know that all my transgressions were numbered on the Scapegoat's head of old. Since thou art not bringing before me any cause of quarrel between myself and thee, for I am walking in the light as thou art in the light, and I have sweet and blessed fellowship with thee, therefore will I bow before thee, and lovingly kiss thy rod, accepting at thy hands whatever thine unerring decree appoints for me." "It is a blessed thing, dear friends, if you can get into this state of mind and heart; and it may happen that your offering of the prayer of the text may be founded upon a complete misapprehension of what the Lord is doing with you.

Sometimes, also, a child of God uses this prayer *under a very unusual sense of sin*. You know that, in looking at a landscape, you may so fix your gaze upon some one object that you do not observe the rest of the landscape. Its great beauties may not be seen by you because you have observed only one small part of it. Now, in like manner, before the observation of the believer, there is a wide range of thought and feeling. If you fix your eye upon your own sinfulness, as you well may do, it may be that you will not quite forget the greatness of almighty love, and the grandeur of the atoning sacrifice; but, yet, if you do not forget them, you do not, think so much of them as you should, for you seem to make your own sin, in all its heinousness and aggravation, the central object of your consideration. There are certain times in which you cannot help doing this; they come upon me, so I can speak from my own experience. I find that, sometimes, do what I will, the master-thought in my mind concerns my own sinfulness, — my sinfulness even since my conversion, my shortcomings and my wanderings from my gracious God, and the sins even

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of my holy things. Well, now, it is well to think of our sin in this way, but it is not well to think of it out of proportion to other things. When I have gone to a physician because I have been ill, I have, of course, thought of my disease; but have I not also thought of the remedy which he will prescribe for me, and of the many cases in which a disease similar to mine has yielded to such a remedy? So, will it not be wrong to fix my thoughts entirely upon one fact to the exclusion of other compensating facts? Yet, that is just how many of us sometimes act, and then we cry to God, as did Job, "Why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity?" when, indeed, it is already pardoned and taken away. If we try to look at it, there flows before us that sacred stream of our Savior's atoning blood which covers all our guilt, so that, great though it is, in the sight of God it does not exist, for the precious blood of Jesus has blotted it all out for ever.

There is another time when the believer may, perhaps, utter the question of our text; that is, *whenever he gets into trouble with his God*. You know

that, after we are completely pardoned, — as we are the moment we believe in Jesus, — we are no longer regarded as criminals before God; but we become his children. You know that it is possible for a man, who has been brought before the court as a prisoner, to be pardoned; but suppose that, after being forgiven, he should be adopted by him who was his judge, and taken into his family so as to become his child. Now, after doing that, you do not suppose that he will bring him up again before the judgment-seat, and try him, and put him in prison. No; but if he becomes the judge's son, I know what he will do with him; he will put him under the rules of his house, to which all the members of his family are expected to conform. Then, if he misbehaves as a son, there will not be that freeness of intercourse and communion between himself and his father that there ought to be. At night, the father may refuse to kiss the wayward and disobedient child. When his brethren are enjoying the father's smile, he may have a frown for his portion; — not that the father has turned him out of his family, or made him to be any the less a child than he was, but there is a cloud between them because of his wrongdoing.

I fear, my dear friends, that some of you must have known, at times, what this experience means; for between you and your Heavenly Father — although you are safe enough, and he will never cast you away from him, — there is a cloud. You are not walking in the light, our heart is not right in the sight of God. I would earnestly urge you never to let this sad thing

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happen; or if it does ever happen, I beg you not to let such a sorrowful state of affairs last for even a day. Settle the quarrel with your God before you go to sleep. Get it put right, as I have seen a child do after he has done wrong. Perhaps he has been pouting and scowling, and his father has had to speak very roughly to him; for a long while, he has been too highspirited to yield, but, at last, the little one has come, and said, 'Father, I was wrong, and I am sorry;' and in that moment there was perfect peace between the two. The father said, 'That is all I wanted you to say, my dear child. I loved you even while you were naughty, but I wanted you to feel and own that you were doing wrong; and now that you have felt it, and owned it, the trouble is all over. Come to my bosom, for you are as much loved as all the rest of the family.' I can quite imagine that, when any of you have been at cross purposes with God, he has refused, for a time, to give you the sense of his fatherly love in your heart. Then, I beseech you, go to him, and I suggest that you cannot pray to him more appropriately than in the words of the text, 'Why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity?' Or pray, as Job did, a little later, 'Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me, for I wish to be at peace with thee, and there can be no rest to my new-born spirit while there is any cause of quarrel between us.

Thus far have I spoken to the children of God. Now I ask for your earnest prayers that I may be guided to speak wisely and powerfully to others.

**II.** THE QUESTION IN OUR TEXT MAY BE ASKED BY SOME WHO ARE NOT



CONSCIOUSLY GOD' S CHILDREN: "Why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity?" And, first, I think that I hear somebody making this kind of enquiry, "Why does not God pardon my sin, and have done with it? When I come to this place, I hear a great deal about atonement by blood, and reconciliation through the death of Christ; but why does not God just say to me, 'It is true that you have done wrong, but I forgive you, and there is an end of the matter?'" With the utmost reverence for the name and character of God, I must say that such a course of action is impossible. God is infinitely just and holy, he is the Judge of all the earth, and he must punish sin. You know, dear friends, that there are times, even in the history of earthly kingdoms, when the rulers say, by their actions, if not in words, "There is sedition abroad, but we will let it go on; we do not want to seem severe, so we will not strike the rebels down." What is sure to be the consequence of such conduct? Why, the evil grows worse and worse; the rebellious men presume upon the liberty allowed

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them, and take still more liberty; and, unless the law-giver intends that his law shall be kicked about the street like a football, unless he means that the peace and safety of his law-abiding subjects should be absolutely destroyed, he is at last obliged to act; and he says, "No; this state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue. I shall be cruel to others unless I draw the sword, and make justice to be respected throughout my realm."

I tell you, dear friends, that the most awful thing in the universe would be a world full of sin, and yet without a hell for its punishment. "the most dreadful condition for any people to be in is that of absolute anarchy, when every man does what he pleases, and law has become utterly contemptible. Now, if, after men had lived lives of ungodliness and sin, of which they had never repented, and from the guilt of which they had never been purged, God were just quietly to take them to heaven, there would be an end of all moral government, and heaven itself would not be a place that anybody need wish to go to. If ungodly people went there in the same state as they are in here, heaven would become a sort of antechamber of hell, a respectable place of damnation; but that can never be the case. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" He has devised a wondrous plan by which he can pardon the guilty without to the slightest degree shaking the foundations of his throne, or endangering his government. Will you be saved in that way, or not? If you reject God's way of salvation, you must be lost, and the blame must lie at your own door. God will not permit anarchy in order that he may indulge your whims, or vacate the throne of heaven that he may save you according to your fancy. At the infinite expense of his heart's love, by the death of his own dear Son, he has provided a way of salvation; and if you reject that, you need not ask Job's question, for you know why he does not pardon your transgression, and take away your iniquity; and upon your own head shall lie the blood of your immortal soul.

Perhaps somebody else says "Well, then, if that is God's way of salvation, let us believe in Jesus Christ, and let us have pardon at once. *But you talk*

*about the need of a new birth, and about forsaking sin, and following after holiness, and you say that without holiness no man can see the Lord.” Yes, I do say it, for God’s Word says it; and I repeat that, for God to give pardon, and then allow men to go on in sin just as they did before, would be a curse to them instead of a blessing. Why, if the dishonest man prospers in the world, is that a blessing to him? No, certainly not; for he only becomes the more dishonest. If a man commits licentiousness, and he*

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escapes the consequences of it in this life, is that a blessing to him? No; for he becomes the more licentious; and if God did not punish men for their sin, but permitted them to be happy in the sin, it would be a greater curse to them than for him to come and say to them, ‘For every transgression of my righteous law, there shall be due punishment; and for all moral evil there shall also be physical evils upon those who commit it.’ I thank God that he does not permit sin to produce happiness; I bless him that he puts punishment at the back of evil, for so it ought to be. The curse of sin is in the evil itself rather than in its punishment; and if it could become a happy thing for a man to be a sinner, then men would sin, and sin again, and sin yet more deeply; and this God win not have. ‘Well,’ says another friend, ‘that is not my trouble. I am willing to be saved by the atonement of Christ, and I am perfectly willing to be made to cease from sin, and to receive from God a new heart and a right spirit; why, then, does he not pardon me, and blot out my transgressions?’ Well, it may be, first, *because you have not confessed your wrongdoing.* You remember that the apostle John says, ‘If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.’ Do you ask, ‘To whom shall I confess my sins?’ Shall you come to me with your confession? Oh no, no, no! I could not stand that. There is an old proverb about a thing being ‘as filthy as a priest’s ear.’ I cannot imagine anything dirtier than that, and I have no wish to be a partaker in the filthiness. Go to God, and confess your sin to him; pour out your heart’s sad story in the ear of him against whom you have offended; say, with David, ‘Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.’ Dear anxious friend, if you say to me, ‘For months I have sought the Lord, and I cannot find him, or get peace of conscience;’ I advise you to try the effect of this plan, shut yourself up in your room alone, and make a detailed confession of your transgression. Perhaps confessing it in the bulk may have helped you to be hypocritical; so try and confess it in detail, especially dwelling upon those grosser sins which most provoke God, and most defile the conscience, even as David prayed, ‘Deliver me from blood -guiltiness, O God.’ That was his great crime; he had been the cause of the death of Uriah, so he confessed that he was guilty of blood, and prayed to be delivered from it. In like manner, confess your sin, whatever it has been. I am persuaded that, often, confession to God would relieve the soul of its load of guilt. Just as when a man has a gathering tumor, and a wise physician lets in the lancet, and that which had gathered is removed, and the inflammation subsides, so often would it be with what the conscience has gathered if, by confession, the heart were

lanced, and the accumulated evil dispersed. How can we expect God to give rest to our conscience if we will not confess to him our sin? May it not be possible, also, dear friends who cannot obtain pardon and peace, that *you are still practising some known sin?* Now, your Heavenly Father means to give you mercy in a way that shall be for your permanent benefit. What are you doing, that is wrong? I do not know you so intimately as to be able to tell what is amiss with you; but I have known a man who never could get peace with God because he had a quarrel with his brother, and as he would not forgive his brother, it was not reasonable that he should expect to receive forgiveness from God. There was another man, who sought the Lord for a long while, but he never could get peace for this reason; he was a travelling draper, and he had what was supposed to be a yard measure, but it was not full length; and, one day, during the sermon, he took up his short measure in the place of worship, and just snapped it across his knee, and then he found peace with God directly he gave up that which had been the means of wrongdoing. He had sought for pardon in vain all the while that he had persevered in evil; but as soon as that was given up, the Lord whispered peace to his soul. Do any of you take “a drop too much” at home? Is that your besetting sin? I mean women as well as men when I ask that question. You smile at the suggestion, but it is no laughing matter, for it is only too true that many, who are never suspected of such a thing, are guilty of drinking to excess. Now it may be that there will never be peace between God and your soul until that glass goes. It will have to go if God is to forgive your sin; so the sooner it goes, the better will it be for you. Perhaps, in your case, the sin is that you do not manage your families right. Are your children never checked when they do wrong? Are they, in fact, allowed to grow up to be children of the devil? Do you expect God and you to be agreed while it; is so? Think what a quarrel God had with his servant Eli over that matter, and remember how that quarrel ended, because Eli mildly said to his sons, “Why do ye such things?” but restrained them not when they made themselves vile. Look, dear friends. God will not save us because of our works; salvation is entirely by grace, but then that grace shows itself by leading the sinner upon whom it is bestowed to give up the sin in which he had formerly indulged. Which, then, will you have, — your sin or your Savior? Do not try to hold sin with one hand, and the Savior with the other, for they cannot both of them be yours; so choose which you will have. I pray that God may discover to you

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what is the sin which is keeping you from peace, and then grant to you the grace to give it up.

“Well,” say you, “I do not know that this is my case at all, for I really do, from my heart, endeavor to give up all sin, and I am sincerely seeking peace with God.” Well, friend, perhaps you have not found it *because you have not been thoroughly earnest in seeking it.* You seem to be in earnest while you are here on a Sunday night, but how earnest are you on Monday night? Perhaps you are fairly so then because you come to the prayermeeting,

but how about Tuesday, and Wednesday, and the rest of the week? When a man really wants to have his soul saved, he should let everything else go until he gets that all-important matter settled. Yes, I will venture to say as much as that. Recollect what the woman of Samaria did when she had received Christ's word at the well at Sychar. She had gone to the well for water; but look at her as she goes back to the city. Is there any waterpot on her head? No; the woman left her waterpot, she forgot what had been to her a necessary occupation when once she had been brought seriously to think about her soul and her Savior. I do not want you to forget that, when you have found Christ, you can carry your waterpot, and yet cleave to Christ; but, until you have really received him by faith, I should like to see you so fully absorbed in the pursuit of the one thing needful that everything else should be put into the second place, or even lower than that; and if you were to say, "Until I am saved, I will do absolutely nothing; I will get me to my chamber, and I will cry to God for mercy, and from that room I will never come until he blesses me," I would not charge you with fanaticism, nor would anybody else who knew the relative value of eternal things and things of time and sense. Why, man, in order to save your coat, would you throw away your life? "Nay," you would say; "the coat is but a trifle compared with my life." Well, then, as your life is of more value than your coat, and as your soul is of more value than your body, and as the first thing you need is to get your sin forgiven that your soul may be saved, until that is done, everything else may well be let go. God give you such desperate earnestness that you must and will have the blessing! When you reach that resolve, you shall have it; when you cannot take a denial from God, you shall not have a denial.

There is still one thing more that I will mention as a reason why some men do not find the Savior, and get their sins forgiven; and that is, *because they do not get off the wrong ground on to the right ground*. If you are ever to be pardoned, dear friend, it must be entirely by an act of divine, unmerited

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favor. Now perhaps you are trying do something to recommend yourself to God; you would scorn with derision the doctrine of being saved by your own merits; but, still, you have a notion that there is something or other in you that is to recommend you to God in some measure or degree, and you still think that the ground of your forgiveness must lie to some extent with yourself. Well, now, you never can have forgiveness in that way. Salvation must be all of works, or else all of grace. Are you willing to be saved as a guilty, hell-deserving sinner, — as one who does not deserve salvation, but, on the contrary, deserves to endure the wrath of God? Are you willing that, henceforth, it shall be said, "That man was freely forgiven all his trespasses, not for his own sake, but for Christ's sake alone?" That is good ground for you to stand upon; that is solid rock. But some men seem to get one foot upon the rock, and they say, "Yes, salvation comes by Christ." Where is that other foot of yours, my friend? Oh! he says that he has been baptized, or that he has been confirmed, or that he has in some way or other done something in which he can trust. Now, all such reliance

as that is simply resting on sand; and however firmly your other foot may be planted on the rock, you will go down: if this foot is on sand. You need good standing for both your feet, dear friends; and see that you get it. Let this be your language, —

***‘Thou, O Christ, art all I want;  
More than all in thee I find.’***

Do not look anywhere else for anyone or anything that can save you; but look to Christ, and to Christ alone. Are you too proud to do that? You will have to humble yourself beneath the mighty hand of God, and the sooner you do so, the better will it be for you. ‘Oh, but I, I, — I must surely do something!’ Listen, —

***‘Till to Jesus’ work you cling  
By a simple faith,  
‘Doing’ is a deadly thing,  
‘Doing’ ends in death.  
‘Cast your deadly ‘doing’ down,  
Down at Jesus’ feet,  
Stand in him, in him alone,  
Gloriously complete!’***

This is the gospel: ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.’ You will never see up in heaven a sign bearing the names ‘Christ,  
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and Co.’ No, it is Christ, and Christ alone, who is the sinner’s Savior. He claims this for himself: ‘I am Alpha and Omega;’ that is, ‘I am A, and I am Z. I am the first letter of the alphabet, and I am the last letter, and I am every other letter from the first down to the last.’ Will you make him to be so to you, dear friend? Will you take him to be your Savior now? ‘He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.’ A friend told us, at one of our prayer-meetings, that ‘*HA -T-H* spells got it.’ ‘He that believeth on the Son is a saved sinner, he has got that everlasting life that can never die, and can never be taken away from him. Therefore, beloved friends, believe in Jesus, and you too shall have this eternal life, you shall have pardon, you shall have peace, you shall have God, and you shall have heaven itself to enjoy before long. God do so unto you, for his great mercy’s sake in Christ Jesus! Amen and Amen.

## **EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.**

### ***JOB 7, AND JOHN 3:14-17.***

Job was sorely troubled by the cruel speeches of his friends, and he answered them out of the bitterness of his soul. What we are first about to read is a part of his language under those circumstances.

**Job 7:1.** *Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days of an hireling?*

Is there not a certain time for each one of us to live? Is there not an end to

all the trouble and sorrow of this mortal state? “Woe is me,” says Job, “will this sad condition of things never come to a close? Must it always be thus with me?”

**2.** *As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, —*

When the day shall close, and he can go to his home, —

**2, 3.** *And as an hireling looketh for the reward of his work: so am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me.*

If that is the case with any of you, dear friends, you ought to be comforted by the thought that a better man than you are underwent just what you are enduring, and underwent it so as to glorify God by it. Remember what the

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apostle James wrote, “Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” But if our case is not so bad as Job’s was, if we are in good health, and surrounded by God’s mercy, let us be very grateful. Every morning that you wake after a refreshing night’s rest, praise God for it, for it might have been far otherwise, for you might have had wearisome nights through pain and suffering,

**4, 5.** *When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone and I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day. My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin is broken, and become loathsome.*

Such was the dreadful disease under which this man of God labored, for the worst of pain may happen to the best of men. Sometimes, God ploughs his best fields most; and why should he not do so? Do not men try to do most with that which will yield most? And so God may most chasten those who will best repay the strokes of his hand. It is no token of displeasure when God smites us with disease; it may be an evidence that we are branches of the vine that bring forth fruit, or else he would not have taken the trouble to prune us.

**6.** *My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and are spent without hope.*

His; spirits are sunk so low that he had not any hope at all left; — at least, there was none apparent just then. O you poor tried children of God, I beseech you once again to see that you are only walking where others have gone before you! Mark their footprints, and take heart again.

**7, 8.** *O remember that my life is wind: mine eye shall no more see good. The eye of him that hath seen me shall see me no more: thine eyes are upon me, and I am not.*

As if God only looked at him, and the very look withered him; or as if there was only time for God just to look at him, and then he disappeared as though, he had been but a dream, an unsubstantial thing. It is good, my brethren, sometimes to know what vanities we are; and if we complain that things around us are vanity, what are we ourselves but the shadows of a shade?

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**9-12.** *As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth*

*down to the grave shall come up no more. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more. Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me?*

Am I such a big thing, such a dangerous thing, that I ought to be watched like this, and perpetually hampered, and tethered, and kept within bounds? Ah, no! Job, you are neither a sea nor a whale, but something worse than either of them. So are we all, — more false than the treacherous sea, harder to be tamed than the wildest of God's creatures. God does set a watch over us, and well he may. But hear Job's complaint: —

**13-15.** *When I say, My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint; then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions: so that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life.*

Were you ever in this terrible place, dear friend? Some of us have been there, and we have used the very language of Job; and yet, for all that, we have been brought up again out of the utmost depths of despondency into the topmost heights of joy. Therefore, be comforted, ye poor prisoners. Through the bars and grating of your soul-dungeon, we would sing unto you this song, — the Lord, that has brought us forth, can bring you forth also, for "the Lord looseth the prisoners." The God of Job is yet alive, strong as ever for the deliverance of such as put their trust in him.

**16, 17.** *I loathe it; I would not live alway: let me alone; for my days are vanity. What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?*

Job seems to say, "I am too little for God to notice me; why does he make so much of me as to chasten me so sorely?"

**18, 19.** *And their thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment? How long wilt thou not depart from me, nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle?*

Blow followed blow in quick succession. Pain came fast upon the heels of pain till Job seems to have had no rest from his anguish. This is the mournful moaning of a man on a sick-bed, worn out with long-continued

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grief. Do not judge it harshly. You may have to use such words yourself, one day; and if you ever do, then judge not yourself hardly, but say, "I am only now where that eminent servant of God, the patriarch Job, once was, and the Lord who delivered him will also deliver me."

**20.** *I have sintered; what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men?*

We did not expect him to call God by that name; yet sorrow hath a quick memory to recall anything by which it may be cheered. "Thou Preserver of men," says Job, "I have sinned: what shall I do?"

**20.** *Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee,*

*'Drawing thy bow, and directing all thine arrows against my poor heart. Hast thou no butts that thou must needs make me thy target, and test thy holy archery upon me?'*

**20.** *So that I am a burden to myself?*

Oh, what heavy words, “a burden to myself!”

**21.** *And why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity? for now shall I sleep in the dust and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be.*

Speaking after the manner of man, he seems to think that, if God does not pardon him soon, the pardon will come too late; for if God comes in mercy by-and-by, he will be dead and gone, and God may seek him, but he shall not be found. This is how men talk when they get a little off their head through the very extremity of grief. We, too, may perhaps talk in the same fashion, one day, so let us not condemn poor Job.

Now let us read a few Verses in the 3rd chapter of the Gospel according to John, that we may be comforted. If any of you are laboring under a sense of sin, I would take you straight away to sin’s only cure.

**John 3:14, 15.** *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

“Whosoever.” Note that word, for it means you, and it means me. No matter though you are near to death’s door, crushed and broken, bruised and mangled, look to the Crucified One, and, looking, you shall find that there is life eternal for you. Though your soul has been ready to choose

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strangling rather than your life, yet there is a better life for you by trusting in Christ. Choose that, and rest in him. Say, from your heart, the last lines of the hymn we sang just now, —

*“Jesus, to thy arms I fly;  
Save me, Lord, or else I die.”*

**16, 17.** *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*

Now this, which is good teaching for those who have but lately come to Christ, or for those who are seeking to come to him, is the very same teaching which will bring comfort to the most advanced and best instructed of the saints. How I love continually to begin with Christ over again as I began at the first! They say, when a man is sick, that it is a good thing to take him to his native place, and when a true believer’s soul gets faint and unbelieving, let him breathe the air of Calvary over again. The learned Grotius, who had spent the most of his life in theological disputations, — not always or yet often on the right side, — when he was dying said, “Read me something;” and they read him the story of the publican and the Pharisee. He said, “And that poor publican I am; thank God, that publican I am.’ God be merciful to me a sinner.” That was the word with which the great scholar entered into heaven, and that is the way in which you and I must come to God. May the Holy Spirit help us all to come to him thus! Amen.

**HYMNS FROM ‘OUR OWN HYM BOOK’ — 296, 606, 607.**



## SPECIAL NOTICE.

With the January number of "The Sword and the Trowel," which will be published before Christmas, Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster will present, as a Memento of the Re-opening of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, a fine Photo Reproduction, on plate paper 20 by 15 inches, showing the interior of the Tabernacle at the Opening Services, with Mr. Sankey, together with Pastor Thomas Spurgeon and the Church Officers.

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Among other items of interest in the January Magazine will be a notable early Sermon by C. H. SPURGEON; the first of a series of papers by Pastor Hugh D. Brown M. A., of Dublin, entitled "Semper Idem" (God's Witness to His own Word); an article by Pastor Thomas Spurgeon on "The Sword and Trowel in the New Century;" the first of a series of papers by Pastor J. E. Walton on "Bush Life in Tasmania;" and the beginning of H. T. S.'s "Diary of a Puritan Gentleman in the Reign of Queen Anne and George I."

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# A SERMON FROM A RUSH.

NO. 651

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 24TH, 1865,**

*BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow without water? Whilst it is yet in his greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite’s hope shall perish.” — Job 8:11-13.

ISAAC walked in the fields at eventide to meditate. I commend him for his occupation. Meditation is exceedingly profitable to the mind. If we talked less, read less, and meditated more, we should be wiser men. I commend him for the season which he chose for that occupation — at eventide. When the business of the day was over, and the general stillness of nature was in harmony with the quiet of his soul. I also commend him for the place which he selected — the wide expanse of nature — the field. Wise men can readily find a thousand subjects for contemplation abroad in the open country. Our four-square room is not very suggestive; but when a man walks in the fields, having the Lord in his heart, and his whole mental faculties directed towards heavenly things, all things aid him in his pleasing occupation. If we look above to sun, moon, and stars, all these remind us of the grandeur of God, and make us ask ourselves, “What is man, that the

Lord should be mindful of him, or the son of man, that Jehovah should visit him?" If we look below, the green meadows, or golden cornfields, all proclaim divine care and bounty. There is not a bird that sings, nor a grasshopper that chirps in the grass, which does not urge us to praise and magnify the name of the Most High: while the plants, from the hyssop on the wall to the cedar which spreads its boughs so gloriously on Lebanon, exhibit to observant eyes the wisdom of the great Creator of all things. The murmuring brook talks to the listening ear in hallowed whispers of him whose cloudy throne supplies its stream; and the air, as it sighs amid the

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trees, tells in mysterious accents of the great unseen, but ever-active Spirit of the living God.

The great book of nature only needs to be turned over by a reverent hand, and to be read by an attentive eye, to be found to be only second in teaching to the Book of Revelation, He who would have us forget to study the fair creation of God, is foolish; he would have us neglect one book by a great author, in order that we may the better comprehend another from the same hand. The pages of inspiration reveal God far more clearly than the fields of creation; but having once obtained the light of God the Holy Spirit, we can then enter the world of nature, which has become consecrated to our best devotions, and find that "in his temple doth every one speak of his glory."

Down by the river's brink let us go, like Pharaoh's daughter, and perhaps among the rushes we shall find a subject for thought, of which we may say, as she did of Moses, "I drew it out of the water." The flag, as it waves in yonder marsh, has a word of warning, and whosoever hath ears to hear, let him hear.

I claim your attention for a preacher who is not often heard: lend him your ears, and when any shall ask you, "What went ye out for to see?" you need not blush to answer, "A reed shaken by the wind." The rush shall, this morning, by God's grace, teach us a lesson of self-examination. Bildad, the Shuhite, points it out to us as the picture of a hypocrite: so, going to our work at once, we shall have three things to talk about this morning. The hypocrite's religion: first, what is it like? secondly, what it lives on; and thirdly, what will become of it?

#### **I. First, then, THE HYPOCRITE'S PROFESSION: WHAT IS IT LIKE?**

It is here compared to a rush growing in the mire, and a flag flourishing in the water. This comparison has several points in it.

**1.** In the first place, hypocritical religion may be compared to the rush, for the rapidity with which it grows. True conversions are often very sudden — as, to wit, the conversion of Saul on his road to Damascus, and the conversion of the Philippian jailer, when suddenly startled out of his sleep and made to cry, "What must I do to be saved?" But the after-growth of Christians is not quite so rapid and uninterrupted: seasons of deep depression chill their joy; hours of furious temptation make a dreadful

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onslaught upon their quiet; they cannot always rejoice; their life is

chequered; they are emptied from vessel to vessel, and are acquainted with grief. True Christians are very like oaks, which take years to reach their maturity: many March winds blow through them before they are well rooted; and oftentimes tempest, and flood, and drought, and hurricane exercise their tremendous powers upon them. Not so the hypocrite: once having made a profession of being converted, things generally go very smoothly with him. ‘Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.’ They are strangers to lamentations over inbred corruption. When believers talk of a warfare within, they are astonished. If we groan out, ‘O wretched man that I am: who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ these gentlemen say, ‘What bad people these Christians must be, to talk in that way! What black hearts they must have! and how inconsistent for them to claim to be children of God!’ The hypocrite can always pray well, and sing well; He meets no hindrances in coming to a mercy-seat, has no groans to mingle with his formal songs. The backs of living men ache under their loads, but a steam-engine having no living sensibilities knows no pains; a horse may stumble from weariness, but a locomotive never; even so the mechanical professor goes on and on and on at an even rate, when living souls enjoy no such perfect equanimity. Strong temptations do not grieve the mere professor; the devil does not care to molest him; he knows he is sure of him, and so he lets him very much alone. The Pharisee’s house stood very firmly, though it was built on sand; and it neither shook, nor stirred, till the flood came; it was as firm to all human appearance as if it had been founded on the Rock of Ages. When the trial-hour came, then the destruction was terribly complete; but meanwhile, its foundations were digged without labor, and its timbers were set up without trouble. It is an ill sign, dear friend, if thou never hast to search thy heart with deep anxiety lest thou shouldst be deceived. To have such strong faith that you never waver is one thing; but to be filled with such strong presumption that you never examine yourself is quite another. ‘Tush!’ says this man, ‘I can do all things; I can run and not be weary; I can walk and not faint; I do not understand these sighings of Little-faith, and limpings of Ready-to-halt; I cannot understand all this noise about conflict within — I am peaceable and quiet always.’ Yes, so it may be. Alas! many have heard the voice, ‘Peace, peace, where there is no peace.’ So like the rush by the river, the hypocrite grows up suddenly and flourishingly in divine things, to all appearance, and finds it easy work to be green and fair in the ways of the Lord.

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**2.** The rush is of all plants one of the most hollow and unsubstantial. It looks stout enough to be wielded as a staff, but he that leaneth upon it shall most certainly fall. It is a water-loving thing, and it partakes of the nature of that on which it feeds; it is unstable as water, and it does not excel; it has a fine appearance, but it is of no service whatever where stability is wanted. So is it with the hypocrite; he is fair enough on the outside, but there is no solid faith in Christ Jesus in him, no real repentance on account of sin, no vital union to Christ Jesus. He can pray, but not in secret, and the

essence and soul of prayer he never knew. He has never wrestled with the angel, never sighed and cried unto God, and been "heard in that he feared." He has a pretended confidence, but that confidence never was founded and bottomed on the finished work of Jesus Christ. He was never emptied of self, never brought down to feel that all his own doings, and willings, and powers, are less than nothing and vanity. If there had been a deep repentance, and a real confidence, and a true life in Jesus, then he had not been the hypocrite that he now is. Oh, dear friends, while I speak upon these things, I have over my spirit the overshadowing of a great gloom. What if some of us should be found to have been as unsubstantial as the rush by the river, when God comes to judge the world? What, when you need a hope to bear you up in the hour of death, what if it should snap beneath you? You high professors, you ancient members and revered church officers, you eloquent preachers of the Word, what if all your profession should, like the baseless fabric of a vision, pass away? You have been drinking of the cup of the Lord, you have been feasting at his sacramental table, you have talked a great deal of rich experiences, you have boasted of the graces which you think the Spirit of God has given you; but what if it should all be a delusion? What if you should have fostered in your soul self-deception, and should now be traversing the way of darkness, while you dream that you are in the way of light? May the Lord search us, and give us that true, solid, substantial, real, tamesthearted faith in Christ which will stand the test.

The reed is hollow, and has no heart, and the hypocrite has none either; and want of heart is fatal indeed. When the Roman augur killed the victim to take an omen from the inwards, he always considered it to be the worst sign of all if no heart was found, or if the heart was shrivelled. "Their heart is divided," said Hosea, "now shall they be found wanting." God abhors the sacrifice where not the heart is found. Sirs, if you cannot give God your hearts, do not mock him with solemn sounds upon thoughtless tongues. If

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you do not mean your godliness, do not profess it. Above all things, abhor mere profession. Jonathan Edwards tells us that in the great revival in America there were conversions of all sorts of people, from harlots upwards, but not one single conversion, he said, of ungodly professors. Those seemed to have been the only persons upon whom the Spirit of God did not descend. Beware, then, of having the outward form of religion, and being hollow and heartless like the rush, for then thy case is desperate indeed.

**3.** A third comparison very naturally suggests itself, namely, that the hypocrite is very like the rush for its bending properties. When the rough wind comes howling over the marsh, the rush has made up its mind that it will hold its place at all hazards. So if the wind blows from the north, he bends to the south, and the blast sweeps over him; and if the wind blows from the south, he bends to the north, and the gale has no effect upon him. Only grant the rush one thing, that he may keep his place, and he will cheerfully bow to all the rest. The hypocrite will yield to good influences if

he be in good society. "Oh yes, certainly, certainly, sing, pray, anything you like." With equal readiness he will yield to evil influences if he happens to be in connection with them. "Oh, yes, sing a song, talk wantonness, run into gay society, attend the theater, take a turn with the dice; certainly, if you wish it; 'When we are at Rome we do as Rome does.'" Anything to oblige anybody is his motto. He is an omnivorous feeder, and like the swine can eat the vegetable of propriety, or the flesh of iniquity. One form of doctrine is preached to him, — very well, he would not wish to contend against it for a moment; it is contradicted by the next preacher he hears, — and really there is a great deal to be said on the other side; so he holds with hares and hounds too. He is all for heat when the weather is hot, and quite as much for cold when it is the season; he can freeze, and melt, and boil, all in an hour, just as he finds it pay best to be solid or liquid. If it be most respectable to call a thing black, well, then, it is black; if it will pay better to call it white, well then it is not so very black, in fact it is rather white, or white altogether if you like to call it so. The gross example of the Vicar of Bray comes at once to one's mind, who had been a papist under Henry VIII., then a protestant under a Protestant reign, then a papist under Mary, then again a Protestant under Elizabeth; and he declared he had always been consistent with his principle, for his principle was to continue the Vicar of Bray. Some there are, who are evidently consistent in this particular, and in the idea that they will make things as easy for themselves

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as they can, and will get as much profit as they can, either by truth or error. Do you not know some such? They have not an atom of that stern stuff of which martyrs are made in the whole of their composition. They love that modern goddess, charity. When Diana went down Charity went up; and she is as detestable a goddess as ever Diana was. Give me a man who will be all things to all men to win souls, if it be not a matter of principle; but give me the man who, when it comes to be a matter of right and wrong, will rather die than deny his faith; who could burn, but could not for a moment conceal his sentiments, much less lay them aside until a more convenient season. True godliness, such as will save the soul, must not be the mere bark, but the heart, the sap, the essence of a man's being — it must run right through and through, so that he cannot live without it. That religion is not worth picking up from a dunghill which you do not carry every day about with you, and which is not the dearest object for which you live. Beloved, we must be ready to die for Christ, or we shall have no joy in the fact that Christ died for us.

**4.** Yet again, the bulrush has been used in Scripture as a picture of a hypocrite, from its habit of hanging down its head. "Is it to hang thy head like a bulrush?" asks the prophet, speaking to some who kept a hypocritical fast. Pretended Christians seem to think that to hang down the head is the very index of a deep piety. To look piously miserable — to speak in a wretched tone of voice — to be constantly lamenting the wickedness of the times, and bewailing the badness of the harvests and the wickedness of our legislature — to see nothing anywhere but what is vile, deceptive, and

abominable, is thought to be the trade mark of superfine godliness. It is the mark of a hypocrite to wear always a sad countenance: Job says of the hypocrite, "Will he delight himself in the Almighty?" and the answer that he expected was, "No, it is altogether impossible!" A real hypocrite finds no satisfaction in his religion; he goes through with it because he thinks he must; he walks to his place of worship with his books under his arm just as a culprit might be supposed to walk up the gallows stairs, and when he gets to a place of worship, he is very proper in all his demeanour — very proper indeed, but he is never joyous. Smile on Sundays! Shocking! What! enjoy anything like mirth at any time! Awful! Now, you understand all about this. There are some things which you must handle very tenderly, because they will break if you don't. A man, dressed in shoddy garments, walks very demurely for fear the rubbish should rend, but good broadcloth allows us liberty of action without fear of such an accident. Gingerbread religionists  
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may only be looked at in their sombre aspects, but genuine believers are not ashamed to be viewed even when their cheerfulness is at its full. A person who has bought a pair of shoes made of brown paper must mincingly tread with delicate steps; but he, who according to Scripture, is shod with iron and brass may, with manly gait, march on, and even leap for joy without fear. I love Christian preciseness of action, but I abhor hypocritical decorum and formalistic exactness of worship. I would advocate holy cheerfulness, a Christian freedom which lets the whole man show itself, a freedom of sorrowing when it is the time for sorrow, and a freedom of rejoicing when it is the time for rejoicing. That constrained, stiff starched religion which some people think such a great deal of, is nothing but the bulrush religion of the hypocrite and the Pharisee, and the sooner we away with it the better. The man whose heart is right with God does not stop always to be saying, "How will this look?" His heart tells him, as he reads the Word, that such a course is right, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he follows it. Right with him is delight. He knows that evil is not denied to him as though he were debarred from pleasure, but that it is only kept from him as a tender parent would keep poison from a child. Our life is the life of liberty; and we find of true religion, that "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

**5.** Once more: the rush is well taken as an emblem of the mere professor from its bearing no fruit. Nobody would expect to find figs on a bulrush, or grapes of Eshcol on a reed. So it is with the hypocrite: he brings forth no fruit. The hypocrite gets as far as this: "I do not drink, I do not swear, I do not cheat, I do not lie, I do not break the Sabbath." His religion is all negative; but when it comes to anything positive he fails. What have you ever done for Christ? You may look at the whole of the hypocrite's life, and it yields nothing. Perhaps he has given a guinea or two to a charity. Yes: but did he give it to God? He has been kind to the poor. Did he look at the poor as being God's poor, and care for them because God cares for them? Did he do it for God? Throughout the whole life of the hypocrite there is nothing in which he really serves God. What! not when he has

made that long prayer? He did it either to satisfy his conscience or to please those who were listening to him. Did he really pray to God and do it for God's glory, and in order that he might have fellowship with God? If so, he is no hypocrite; but the hypocrite proper, though he has left off many wrong things, yet he has not advanced so far as to bring forth fruit meet for repentance; he has not run in the way of holiness; he has not

sought after the image of Christ; he does not delight in communion with Christ; he has no faith, no joy, no hope, no conformity to the spirit of the Master; he lacks fruit, and therefore he is as the rush, and not as a plant of the Lord's right hand planting.

I will not stay further to work out this parallel; only if any words have seemed to strike you, let them strike you. If there has been a sentence in what I have said that suited my own case, I do desire to feel its power. The worst is, that some of you who are most sincere will be troubled when you search yourselves, when we do not want you to be; and others who are really hypocrites are the very last persons to think they are so. When our young members come to me in such trouble, crying, 'Sir, I am afraid I am a hypocrite,' I always think, 'I believe you are not, or else you would not be afraid of it.' But those who are never afraid, who have just written it down as a matter of fact that all is well with them, should listen to the word of the prophet, "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not." The worm may be in the center of the apple, when the cheek of the fruit is still beautiful to look upon. God save us from hypocrisy, and grant us grace to see ourselves in a true light.

**II.** Secondly, we have to consider WHAT IT IS THAT THE HYPOCRITE'S RELIGION LIVES ON. "Can the rush grow up without mire? Can the flag grow without water?" The rush is entirely dependent upon the ooze in which it is planted. If there should come a season of drought, and the water should fail from the marsh, the rush would more speedily die than any other plant. "Whilst it is yet in its greenness and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb." The Hebrew name for the rush signifies a plant that is always drinking; and so the rush lives perpetually by sucking and drinking in moisture. This is the case of the hypocrite. The hypocrite cannot live without something that shall foster his apparent piety. Let me show you some of this mire and water upon which the hypocrite lives. Some people's religion cannot live without excitement: revival services, earnest preachers, and zealous prayer-meetings keep them green; but the earnest minister dies, or goes to another part of the country; the Church is not quite so earnest as it was, and what then? Where are your converts? Oh! how many there are who are hot-house plants: while the temperature is kept up to a certain point they flourish, and bring forth flowers, if not fruits; but take them out into the open air, give them one or two nights'

frost of persecution, and where are they? My dear hearers, beware of that godliness which depends upon excitement for its life. I do not speak



against religious excitement: men get excited over politics, and science, and trade — why should they not be excited about the far weightier things of religion? But still, though you may indulge yourself with it sometimes, do not let it be your element. I am afraid that many Churches have been revived and revived, till they became like big bubbles full of wind, and now they have almost vanished into thin air. The grace which man gives, man can take away. If your piety has sprung up like a mushroom, it will be about as frail. Doubtless many are converted at revivals who run well and hold out; and then their conversion is the work of the Spirit of God; but there are as many, I fear, of another kind, who get delirious with excitement; who fancy that they have repented, dream that they have believed, and then imagine themselves to be the children of God, and go on in such a delusion perhaps year after year. Beware! beware! Some hypocrites can no more live without excitement, than the rush can live without water; but, dear hearers, pray that you may be like the palm tree, which even in the desert, still continues green, and brings forth its fruit in the year of drought.

Many mere professors live upon encouragement. You are the child of godly parents: those parents naturally look with great delight upon the first signs of grace in you, and they encourage and foster, as they should do, everything that is good. Or you belong to a class such as some of those most blessed classes which meet here, presided over by tender, loving spirits, and whenever you have a little difficulty you can run to these kind helpers; whenever any fresh temptation arises you find strength in their warnings and counsels. This is a very great privilege. I wish that in all Churches they would practice the text, “Encourage him” more and more. We ought to comfort the feeble-minded and support the weak. But, dear friends, beware of the piety which depends upon encouragement. You will have to go, perhaps, where you will be frowned at and scowled at, where the head of the household, instead of encouraging prayer, will refuse you either the room or the time for engaging in it. You may meet with hard words, bitter sneers, and cruel mockings, because you profess to be a Christian. Oh! get grace which will stand that fiery trial. God give you a grace that will be independent of human helpers, because it hangs upon the bare arm of God himself.

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Some, too, we know, whose religion is sustained by example. It may be the custom in the circle in which you move to attend a place of worship; nay, more, it has come to be the fashion to join the Church and make a profession of religion. Well, example is a good thing. When I was crossing the Humber from Hull to New Holland the other day, a steamer came in with sheep on board, and there was some difficulty in getting them from the boat to the pier; but the butcher first dragged one sheep over the drawbridge, and then the others came along readily enough. Example is a good thing; one true sheep of Christ may lead the rest in the way of truth and obedience; but a religion which depends entirely on other people, must obviously go to ruin when subjected to the temptation of an evil example.

Why if you simply join the Church because other young people do it, or profess such-and-such a faith because it happens to be the prevailing doctrine in the district where you reside, why, then, your religion will depend on the locality, and when you move somewhere else, your religion will move off too, or you from it. Young man, avoid this feeble sort of piety. Be a man who can be singular when to be singular is to be right. If the whole world shall run headlong down the broad road, be it yours to thread your way through the crowd against the current along the uphill way of life. The dead fish floats down the stream, the live fish goes against it. Show your life by shunning unholy example.

Furthermore, a hypocrite's religion is often very much supported by the profit that he makes by it. Mr. By-ends joined the Church, because, he said, he should get a good wife by making a profession of religion. Besides, Mr. By-ends kept a shop, and went to a place of worship, because he said, the people would have to buy goods somewhere, and if they saw him at their place very likely they would come to his shop, and so his religion would help his trade. Thus he argued that there were three good things — a profession of religion, a good wife, and a good trade as well. Suppose, Mr. By-ends, that your religion involved your missing the supposed good wife, and losing the good customers, what about it then? "Why, then," says he, "I'm very sorry, but really we must look to the main chance; we must not commit ourselves too far." That is Mr. By-ends' way of judging. He does not look upon the things of God as the main chance; they are means to an end — that is all. I fear me there is much of this everywhere; you will know best, any of you, how far you are affected by it. I am sure there are few, if any of you, who can be suspected of coming here to gain trade, for the thing does not answer in such a city as London; but in country towns this

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operates marvellously. You can have the dissenting trade if you go to meeting, or you can have the Church trade if you go to the steeple-house. Well, worshippers of the golden calf, do you know what Christ will do with you, if you are found in his temple, when he comes? That scourge of small cords will be on your backs. "Take these things hence," he will say, as he sees your tables, and your doves, and your shekels; "my Father's house shall be called a house of prayer, ye have made it a den of thieves." The rush will grow where there is plenty of mire, plenty of profit for religion, but dry up the gains, and where would some people's religion be? Pray with all your might against this loathsome disgusting sin of making a pretension to godliness, merely for the sake of getting something by it. Yet, doubtless, there are crowds who do this.

With certain persons their godliness rests very much upon their prosperity. "Doth Job serve God for nought?" was the wicked question of Satan concerning that upright man; but of many it might be asked with justice, for they love God after a fashion because He prospers them; but if things went ill with them they would give up all faith in God. I remember two who joined this church, I remember them with sorrow; I faintly hope good things of them, but I frequently fear the worst. They joined this church

when things were going very well; but almost from that very time they had a succession of losses, and they imputed this to their having made a profession of religion, and so gave up outward religious duties. Whether they did that out of a scrupulous honesty, I scarce can tell, or whether it really was this, that they could not receive evil at the hand of God as well as good, I do not know; I am inclined to fear it was the latter. There are some who quarrel with the most High. If they can clearly see that, since the time of their supposed conversion, the world has gone prosperously with them, then they will love God in their poor carnal way; but if it has been nothing but adversity, then they are astonished, and think God is not kind with them. Do you know that the promise of the old covenant was prosperity, but the promise of the new covenant is adversity? Listen to this text: ‘Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit’ — what! ‘He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.’ If you bring forth fruit you will have to endure affliction. “Alas!” says one, “that is a terrible prospect.” Ah! but, beloved, this affliction works out such comfortable fruit, that the Christian, who is the subject of it, has learned to rejoice in tribulations, because as his tribulations abound so his consolation aboundeth by Christ Jesus. Rest  
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assured, if you are a godly man, you will be no stranger to the rod. Trials must and will befall. Do not let me mislead anybody into the idea of praying for trouble. I have heard of one who did so; he never did it but once; many trials made him wiser. The true-born child knows how to bear the rod, but he will not ask for it; if he asked for it he would be very silly, and it would be of no service to him. You will have it sooner or later, and though, it may be, months and years will roll very quietly with you, yet there will be days of darkness, and you ought to rejoice that there are such, for in these you will be weaned from earth and made meet for heaven; you will be delivered from your clingings to the present, and made to long, and pine, and sigh for the things which are not seen but eternal, so soon to be revealed to you.

To conclude this point. The hypocrite is very much affected by the respectability of the religion which he avows. John Bunyan’s pithy way of putting it is, ‘Many walk with religion when she wears her silver slippers;’ but they forsake her if she goes barefoot. May I ask you this question? What would you do if to follow Christ were penal according to the laws of the land? If you had to live under perpetual jeopardy of life for reading the Word, would you hide it as the saints of God did, behind the wainscoat or under the floor, and read it down in the cellar or up in the garret at spare moments? Could you come forward in the day of trial as those did in Pliny’s time, and say, ‘I am a Christian’? Do you think that like poor Tomkins, when Bonner held his finger over the candle to let him see what it was like, you could still say you could burn, but you could not turn? Could you stand as some of the martyrs did at the stake, telling those who looked on that if they did not clap their hands at last they might know their religion was not true, and so at the very last, when their poor fingers were

all on fire, they would still lift them up, and wave their hands to and fro, and cry out, "None but Christ! none but Christ!" Do you think you would have the grace to suffer for Christ Jesus? You may say, "I fear I should not." My dear friends, that fear is a very natural one; but mark you, if you can bear the ordinary trials of the day, the constant trials of the world, and take them before God and exhibit Christian patience under them, you may hope that as a believer in Christ you would have more grace given you when the trials became more severe, and so you would be able to pass through them as the saints did of old. But mark you, if the present trials and troubles of the day are too much for you, and you cannot exhibit Christian patience under them, I am compelled to ask you in the language

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of Jeremiah, "If thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, how wilt thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" This may help us to try ourselves.

**III.** We have a third point to close with, and that is, WHAT BECOMES OF THE HYPOCRYTE'S HOPE?

"While it is yet in its greenness and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish." Long before the Lord comes to cut the hypocrite down, it often happens that he dries up for want of the mire on which he lives. The excitement, the encouragement, the example, the profit, the respectability, the prosperity, upon which he lived fail him, and he fails too. Alas, how dolefully is this the case in all Christian Churches! Little have we had to mourn over defections during the years of our ministry; but we have had some sorrowful, very sorrowful cases, and I doubt not we shall have more. "Lord, is it I?" "Lord, is it I?" is a question that may be passed round among professing Christians now. I fear that there are those here this morning who one day will deny the Lord that bought them, and crucify the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame. "Oh!" says one, "it cannot be me." Do not be too sure, friend, do not be too sure! If I could come in prophetic spirit to some of you who will do this, and look you in the face, and tell you what you will do, you would say like Hazeal, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" And I should have to settle my countenance until I became ashamed, and look at you yet again, and say, "You are no dog, and yet you will play the dog, and return to your vomit, and become yet again what once you were, only with this aggravation, that you will have sinned against light and against knowledge, against sacred influences and professed enjoyments of divine love." You have cleansed the house, you have swept it, you have garnished it, and the evil spirit is gone; but if the Holy Spirit has not driven him out, if this has not been a work of power on the part of God, that evil spirit will come back, and he will take unto himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they shall enter in and dwell there, and your last end will be worse than the first. Better not to have known the way of righteousness than, having

known it, to be turned back again. The worst of men are those traitors who leave the army of truth to side with the foe. I believe in the doctrine of the final perseverance of every true child of God; but there are in all our churches certain spurious pretenders who will not hold on their way, who  
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will blaze and sparkle for a season, and then they will go out in darkness. They are ‘wandering stars, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.’ Better far make no pretension of having come to Christ, and of having been born again, unless through divine grace thou shalt hold fast to the end. Remember the back door to hell! Remember the back door to hell! There is a public entrance for the open sinner; but there is a back door for the professed saint; there is a back door for the hoary-headed professor, who has lived many years in apparent sincerity, but who has been a liar before God. There is a back door for the preacher who can talk fast and loudly, but who does not in his own heart know the truth he is preaching: there is a back door to hell for Church members, who are amiable and excellent in many respects, but who have not really looked unto the Lord Jesus Christ and found true salvation in him. God grant that this may wake some, who otherwise would sleep themselves into perdition.

Yet again, where the rush still continues green because it has mire and water enough on which to feed, another result happens, namely, that ere long the sickle is used to cut it down. So must it be with thee professor, if thou shalt keep up a green profession all thy days, yet if thou be heartless, spongy, soft, yielding, unfruitful, like the rush thou wilt be cut down, and sorrowful will be the day when, with a blaze, thou shalt be consumed. Oh! to be cut down at the last. Death, I hope, beloved, will be to many of you the season of your greatest joy; you will climb to Pisgah’s top with weary footsteps, but when once there, the vision of the landscape will make amends for all the toil. The brooks, and hills, and vales, with milk and honey flow; and your delighted eyes shall gaze upon your portion, your eternal heritage. But oh! how different will be our lot, if instead of this, ‘Tekel ’ shall be written upon us at the last, because we are found wanting. ‘O my God! my God! hast thou forsaken me? Am I, after all, mistaken? Have I played the hypocrite, and must I take the mask off now? Have I covered over the cancer? Have I worn a golden cloth over my leprous forehead, and must it be rent away? and must I stand, the mock of devils and the laughter of all worlds? What! have I drunk of thy cup, have I eaten with thee in the streets, and must I hear thee say, ‘I never knew thee, depart from me thou worker of iniquity?’ Oh! must it be?’ Then how hard will be the bed on which I die! How stuffed with thorns that pillow! How tortured and anguished my poor broken heart, when every prop is knocked away, and the house comes tumbling down about my ears, when every drop of comfort is dried up, and even here the thirsty spirit lacks a drop of  
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cordial to afford it comfort! O my dear hearers, by the eternal God I do conjure you, seek a genuine religion. Do not put off self-examination. I dare not put it off on my own account, and I do pray you do not postpone

it on yours. If I have not said a word to comfort and to cheer this morning, forgive that lack of service, for my aim is to drive at this one thing — it will in the end be the best and most comforting to you all, if you will set to work now, and with diligence try yourselves, whether ye be in the faith. Cry to God to aid you in this; you cannot do it well yourself, for “the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?” O Cry to him — “Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my ways.” Time is flying: set about the business ere it is gone. Death is coming on: search yourselves ere the darkness thickens into midnight gloom. The judgment-day will soon arrive; the king will sit upon the great white throne. Oh! before he judges you, judge yourselves, that ye be not judged. The division will soon take place between the goats, and the sheep. O, seek to be under Christ the heavenly Shepherd now, that ye be not banished from his presence at the last. What more can I say? It is not your body that is at stake — it is not your estates that are in jeopardy — your souls, your undying souls, destined to heaven’s glories or to hell’s miseries are now in question. Search yourselves, search yourselves, and God Almighty search you too.

Ah! there are some of you who have no need to search. Without any trial you know yourselves to be on the wrong side; and there are others of you who, when you have searched, will be still afraid that you are wrong. Ah! well, whatsoever we are, or may have been, remember Jesus came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” Looking to that thorn -crowned head, those dear hands and feet nailed to the tree, that blessed heart all set abroad by the soldier’s spear — looking there, looking there only, looking there now, we find salvation. Believers, you have looked before; but if that be a matter of question, look now. “Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth.” Repeat that glance which gave you comfort. There is life still in a look at that Crucified One; there is life at this moment for thee. Jesu! thy people look to thee again! Thou Lover of our souls! accept us! Oh, you who never looked before, he reigns in glory, mighty to save. Repentance and remission of sins he gives. Only do but trust him with your souls. Have done with all your works, your willings, your prayings, your tears, your

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everything as a ground of confidence, and trust in him who died for sinners, and you ‘shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of his hands.’ The Lord grant we may be found right at last; for Jesus’ sake!  
Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — Psalm 139.***

# **THE BEGINNING, INCREASE, AND END OF THE DIVINE LIFE.**

NO. 311

**DELIVERED ON SABHATH EVENING, APRIL 29TH, 1860,**

*BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,*

**AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

*“T hough thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase.”*

*— Job 8:7.*

THIS was the reasoning of Bildad the Shuhite. He wished to prove that Job

could not possibly be an upright man, for if he were so, he here affirms that his prosperity would increase continually, or that if he fell into any trouble, God would awake for him, and make the habitation of his righteousness prosperous; and though his family were now all destroyed, and his wealth scattered to the winds, yet if he were an upright man, God would surely appear for him, and his latter end would greatly increase.

Now, the utterances of Bildad, and of the other two men who came to comfort Job, but who made his wounds tingle, are not to be accepted as being inspired. They spake as men — as mere men. They reasoned no doubt in their own esteem logically enough; but the Spirit of God was not with them in their speech, therefore with regard to any sentiment which we find uttered by these men, we must use our own judgment; and if it be not in consonance with the rest of Holy Scripture, it will be our bounder duty to reject it as being but the word of man — of a wise and ancient man it is true, but still of a man only.

With regard to the passage which I have selected as a text, it is true — altogether apart from its being said by Bildad, or being found in the Bible at all; it is true, as indeed the facts of the book of Job prove: for Job did greatly increase in his latter end. His beginning was small: he was brought down to poverty! to the potsherd and to the dunghill he had many graves,

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but no children; he had had many losses, he had now nothing left to lose; and yet God' did awake for him; his righteousness came out from the darkness which had eclipsed it; he shone in sevenfold prosperity so that the words of Bildad were prophetic, though he knew it not; God put into his mouth language which did come true, after all. Indeed, we have here a great principle — a principle against which none can ever contend. The beginning of the godly and the upright man may be but very small, but his latter end shall greatly increase.

Evil things may seem to begin well, but they end badly; there is the 'dash and the glare, but afterwards the darkness and the black ash. They promise fairly: their sun rises in the zenith, and then speedily sets, never to rise again. Evil things begin as mountains; they end as mole-hills. You sail upon their ocean at first, and as you sail onward it grows into a river, and afterwards into a dry bed, if not into burning sands. Behold Satan in the garden of Eden. Sin begins with the promise, "Ye shall be as gods!" How grand is its beginning! Where ends it? Shivering beneath the trees of the garden, complaining of nakedness, sin comes to its end. Or see it in Satan himself. He stretches out his right hand to snatch the diadem of heaven; he would be Lord paramount. He cannot bear to serve, he longs to reign. Oh! glittering vision, that enchants the eye of an arch-angelic splat! But where ends it? The vision is ad gone, and is succeeded by "the blackness of darkness for ever;" and the chains reserved in fire for those that kept not their first estate So will it be with you, too, my friend, if you have chosen the path of evil to-day your mirth is as the crackling of thorns under a pot; it blazes, it crackle. with excess of joy; to morrow thou shalt find nothing there but a handful of ashes, and darkness and cold. Ay, the path of evil is



down hill from its sunny summits, to its dark ravines — from the pretended loftiness, which it assumes when it professes to be a cherub, to that lowliness in which it finds itself to be a fiend. Evil goeth downward; it hath its great things first, and then its terrible things last. Not so, however, with good. With good the beginning is even small; but its latter end doth greatly increase. “The path of the just is as the shining light,” which sheds a few flickering rays at first, which exercises a combat with the darkness, but it “shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” As the coming forth of stars at even-tide, when first one, and then another, and yet another struggles through the darkness, till at last the whole starry host are marshaled on the heavenly plains — so is it with good — it beginneth with grains of sand, it goeth on to hills, and anon it swelleth up to mountains; it beginneth with

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the rippling rill — the little cascade that leapeth from its secret birth-place, and down the mountain it dasheth, it swelleth to a joyous stream, wherein the fish do leap; anon it becomes a river, which bears upon its surface the navigation of nations, and then it rolls at last an ocean that belts the globe. Good things progress. They are like Jacob’s ladder — they ascend round by round. We begin as men, we end as angels; we climb until the promise of Satan is fulfilled in a sense in which he never understood it; we become as gods, and are made partakers of the Divine, being reconciled unto God, and then having God’s grace infused into us.

The principle, then, upon which I have to speak this morning, is this, — that though the beginnings of good things are small, yet their latter end shall greatly increase. Instead, however, of dealing with this as a mere doctrine, I propose to use it practically; assume the fact, and then make a practical use of it. Three ends shall I hope to serve — first, to quiet the fears of those who are but beginners in grace; secondly, to confirm their faith; and, thirdly, to quicken their diligence. May I ask the prayers of God’s people here that I may be strengthened in this preaching? I can not tell how it is, — the cold clammy sweat comes over me now I am about to address you, and I feel almost quivering with weakness; nevertheless, this is a subject which may strengthen me as well as you and therefore let us go to it at once.

**I.** First, then, for THE QUIETING OF YOUR FEARS. Thou sayest, my hearer, “I am but a beginner in grace, and therefore I am vexed with anxiety, and full of timorousness.” Yes, and it shall be my business, if God the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, shall enable me, to give thee some few sweet words which, like wafers made with honey, thou mayest roll under thy tongue, and find them satisfactory and pleasant, even as that manna which came down from heaven, and fed the Israelites in the wilderness.

Perhaps thy first fear, if I put it into words, is this: — “My beginning is so small that I cannot tell when it did begin, and therefore, methinks I cannot have been converted, but am still in the gad of bitterness.” O beloved I how many thousands like thyself have been exercised with doubts upon this point! They were not converted in an instant they were not stricken down

as in the Revivals; they were not nerved with terrible alarms, such as John Bunyan describeth in his 'Grace Abounding; but they were called of God, as was Lydia, by a still small voice. Their hearts were gradually and happily opened to receive the truth, it was not as if a tornado or a hurricane rushed

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through their spirits; but a soft zephyr blew, and they lived and came to God. And you doubt, do you, because from this very reason you cannot tell when you were first converted? Be encouraged; it is not needful for you to know when you were regenerated; it is but necessary for you to know that you are so. If thou canst set no date to the beginning of thy faith, yet if thou dost believe now, thou art saved. If in thy diary there stands no red-letter day in which thy sins were pardoned, and thy soul accepted, yet if thy trust be in Jesus only, this very day thou art pardoned, and thou sort accepted, despite thy ignorance of the time when. God's promises bear no date; our notes are dated because there is a time when they run due, and we are apt to forget them; God's promises bear none, and his gifts sometimes do not bear any. If thou art saved — though the date he erased — yet do thou rejoice and triumph evermore in the Lord thy God. True, there are some of us who can remember the precise spot where we first found the Savior. The day will never be forgotten when these eyes looked to the cross of Christ and found their tears all wiped away. But thousands in the fold of Jesus know not when they were brought in; be it enough for them to know they are there. Let them feed upon the pasture, let them lie down beside the still waters, for whether they came by night or by day they did not come at a forbidden hour. Whether they came in youth or in old age, it matters not; all times are acceptable with God, "and whosoever cometh," come he when he may, "he will in nowise be cast out." Does it not strike you as being very foolish reasoning if you should say in your heart, "I am not converted because I do not know when?" Nay, with such reasoning as that, I could prove that old Rome was never built, because the precise date of her building is unknown, nay, we might declare that the world was never made, for its exact age even the geologist cannot tell us. We might prove that Jesus Christ himself never died, for the precise date on which he expired on the tree is lost beyond recovery; nor doth it signify much to us. We know the world was made, we know that Christ did die, and so you — if you are now reconciled to God, if now your trembling arms are cast around that cross, you too are saved — though the beginning was so small that you cannot tell when it was. Indeed, in living things, it is hard to put the finger upon the beginning. Here is a fruit — will you tell me when it began to be? Was it at the time when first the tree sent forth its fruit-bud? Did this fruit begin when first the flower shed its exhalations of perfume upon the air? Indeed, you could not have seen it if you had looked. When was it? Was it when the full-ripe flower was blown away,

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and its leaves were scattered to the wind, and a little embryo of fruit was left? 'Twere hard to say it did not begin before that, and equally hard to say at what precise instant that fruit began to be formed. Ay, and so is it

with divine grace, the desires are so faint at the beginning, the convictions are but the etchings upon the plate, which afterwards must be engraver with a harder instrument; and they are such flimsy things such transient impressions of divine truth, that 'twere difficult to say what is transient and what permanent, what is really of the Spirit of God, and what is not; what hath saved the soul, or what only brought it to the verge of salvation; what made it really live, or what was really the calling together of the dry bones before the breath came, and the bones began to live. Quit your fears, my hearers, upon this point, for if ye are saved, no matter when, ye never shall be unsaved.

Another doubt also arises from this point. "Ah! sir," saith a timid Christian, "it is not merely the absence of all date to my conversion, but the extreme weakness of the grace I have." "Ah," saith one, "I sometimes think I have a little faith, but it is so mingled with unbelief, distrust, and incredulity, that I can hardly think it is God's gift, the faith of God's elect. I hope sometimes I have a little love, but it is such a beginning, such a mere spark, that I cannot think it is the love which God the Holy Spirit breathes into the soul; my beginning is so exceeding small, that I have to look, and look, and look again, at times, before I can discern it for myself. If I have faith, it is but as a grain of mustard seed, and I fear it will never be that goodly tree, in the midst of whose branches the birds of the air might rest." Courage, my brother, courage; however small the beginnings of grace, they are such beginnings that they shall have a glorious end. When God begins to build, if he lay but one single stone he will finish the structure; when Christ sits down to weave, though he casts the shuttle but once, and that time the thread was so filmy as scarcely to be discernible, he will nevertheless continue till the piece is finished, and the whole is wrought. If thy faith be never so little, yet it is immortal, and that immortality may wed compensate for its littleness. A spark of grace is a spark of Deity — as soon may Deity be quenched as to quench grace — that grace within thy soul given thee of the Spirit shall continue to burn, and he who gave it shall fan it with his own soft breath, for "he win not quench the smoking flax;" he will bring it to a fire, and afterwards to a furnace, tin thy faith shall attain to the full assurance of understanding. Oh! let got the littleness of God's beginnings stagger you. Who would think, if he stood at the source of the Thames,

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that it would ever be such a river as it is — making this city rich? So little is it that a child might stop it with his hand, and but a handful of miry clay might dam its course, but there it rolls a mighty river that man cannot stop. And so shall it be with thee; thy faith is so little that it seems not to exist at all and thy love so faint that it can scarcely be called love, but thy latter end shall greatly increase, till thou shalt become strong and do exploits; the babe shall become a giant; and he that stumbled at every straw shall move mountains, and make the very hills to shake.

Having thus spoken upon two fears, which are the result of these small beginnings, let me now try to quiet another. "Ah!" saith the heir of heaven, "I do hope that in me grace hath commenced its work, but my fear is, that

such frail faith as mine will never stand the test of years. I am," saith he, "so weak, that one temptation would be too much for me; how then can I hope to pass through yonder forest of spectra held in the hands of valiant enemies? A drop makes me tremble, how shall I stem the roaring flood of life and death? Let but one arrow fly from hell it penetrates my tender flesh; what then if Satan shall empty his quiver? I shall surely fall by the hand of the enemy. My beginnings are so small that I am certain they will soon come to their end, and that end must be black despair." Be of good courage, brother, have done with that fear once for all; it is true, as thou sayest, the temptation will be too much for thee, but what host thou to do with it? Heaven is not to be won by thy might, but by the might of him who has promised heaven to thee; thy crown of life is to be obtained, not by thy arm, but by that arm which now holds it out, and bids thee run towards it. If thy perseverance rested upon thyself thou couldst not persevere an hour; if spiritual life depended on itself it would be like the shooting-star, which makes a shining trail for a moment and then is gone; but thanks be unto God, it is written — "Because I live, ye shall live also." "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

*"The feeblest saint shall win the day,  
Though death and hell obstruct the way,"*

because that feeble saint is girded with Jehovah's strength. If I had to fight in another man's strength, and I knew that he had gigantic force, I should not estimate the power of my own limbs and muscles, but of his limbs and muscles; and so if I have to fight in the strength of God, I am not to reckon by what I can do, but what he can do; not what I am able, but what he is able to accomplish. I am not to go forth bound and limited, and cramped,

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and bandaged by my own infirmity, but made free, and valorous, and unconquerable through that Divine omnipotence, which first spoke all things into existence, and now maintaineth all things by the word of his power. Stand up, poor brother, full of fears though you be, and for once glory in your infirmities, and boast in your Master. I say it in thy behalf, and on my own — ye principalities and powers of darkness, ye leaguered hosts of hell, ye enemies in human form or in form demoniso, I challenge ye all; more than a match for every one of you am I if God be with me, less than nothing were I, if left alone; but were I weaker than I am I would defy you an, for God is my strength; Jehovah is become my strength and my song; he also has become my salvation, therefore will we tread down our enemies' and Moab shall become as straw that is trodden down for the dunghill; in God will we rejoice, yea in God will we greatly rejoice, and in him will we rejoice all the day.

Thus have I dealt with a third fear. Let me seek to quiet and pacify one other fear. "Nay, but," say you, "I never can be saved; for when I look at other people, at God's own true children, — I am ashamed to say it, — I am but a miserable copy of them. So far from attaining to the image of my Master, I fear I am not even like my Master's servants. Look at such -anone, how he preaches the truth with power, what fluency he has in prayer,

what service he undertakes! but I — I am such a beginner in grace, that  
*'Hosannas languish on my tongue,  
And my devotion dies.'*

I live at a poor dying rate I sometimes run, but oftener creep, and seldom or ever fly. Where others are shaking mountains, I am stumbling over mole-bills. The saints seem to bestride this narrow world like some great colossus, but I walk under their huge legs, and peep about, to find myself a poor dishonored slave. I have no power, no strength' no might." Pause, brother, pause; stop thy murmuring for a moment. If some little star in the sky should declare it was not a star, because it did not shine as brightly as Sirius or Aroturus, how foolish would be its argument I If the moon should insist upon it that she was never made by God, because she could not shine as brightly as the sun, lie on her pale face, that she cannot be content to be what her Lord hath made her! If the nettle would not bloom, because it was not a pine, and if the hyssop on the wall refused to grow, because it was not a cedar, oh! what dislocation would there be in the noble frame of this universe! If these murmurings that vex us vexed the whole of God's

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creatures, then were this earth a howling wildness indeed. Now, let me talk to thee a moment, to calm thy fears. Hast thou, my brother, ever learned to distinguish between grace and gifts? For know that they are marvelously dissimilar. A man may be saved who has not a grain of gifts, but no man can be saved who hath no grace. Yonder brother who prayed, yonder friend who preaches, yonder sister who spoke — all these perhaps acted so well, because God had given them excellent gifts. It might not be that it was because of grace. When you are in the prayer meeting, and hear a brother extremely fluent, remember that there are men quite as fluent about their daily business, and that fluency is not fervency, and that even the appearance of fervency is not absolutely an evidence that there is fervency in the soul. If thou art so mean a thing that thou canst not spell a word in any book, or put six words together grammatically. if thou canst offer no prayer in public, if thou art so poor a scholar that every fool is wiser than thou art, yet if thou best in thy heart, thou art saved, and that is the matter in point just now, whether thou art saved or not. 'Covet earnestly the beat gifts; 'but s till, sit not down and murmur because thou hast them not, for one grain of grace outweighs a pound of gifts; one particle of grace is far more precious than an the gifts that a Byron ever had, or that Shakespeare ever possessed within his soul, vast and almost infinite though the gifts of those men certainly were.

And yet another question would I put to you. My dear brother, have you ever learned to distinguish between grace that saves, and the grace which developer itself afterwards? Remember, there are some graces that are absolutely necessary to the saving of the soul; there are some others that are only necessary to its comfort. Faith, for instance, is absolutely necessary for salvation; but assurance is not. Love is indispensable, but that high decree of love which induces the martyr's spirit, does not reign in the breast of every one, even of those who are saved. The possession of grace

in some degree is needful to salvation; but the possession of grace in the highest degree, though it be extremely desirable, is not absolutely necessary for an entrance into heaven. Bethink thee, then, thus to thyself, if I be the meanest lamb in Jesus' fold, I would be happy to think that I am in the flock, if I be the smallest babe in Jesus' family, I will bless his name to think that I have a portion among the sanctified. if I be the smallest jewel in the Savior's gown, I will glisten and shine as best I can, to the praise of him that bought me with his blood. If I cannot make such swelling music in the orchestra of heaven as the pealing organ may, then will I be but as a  
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bruised reed, which may emit some faint melody. If I cannot be the beacon fire that scares a continent, and throws its light across the deep, I will seek to be the glow-worm that may at least let the weary traveler know something of its whereabouts. O Christians! ye that have but little beginnings, quiet your fears; for these little beginnings, if they be of God, will save your soul, and you may in this rejoice, yea, rejoice exceedingly. I must ask your patience now while I turn to the second head, and I shall dwell upon that very briefly indeed.

**II.** Upon this head I wish to say a word or two for THE CONFIRMATION OF YOUR FAITH. I am sure you will give me your prayerful attention while I speak for the confirmation of my own faith as well as yours.

Well, brothers and sisters, the first confirmation I would offer you is this: — Our beginnings are very, very small, but we have a joyous prospect in our text. Our latter end shall greatly increase; we shall not always be so distrustful as we are now. Thank God, we look for days when our faith shall be unshaken, and firm as mountains be. I shall not for ever have to mourn before my God that I cannot love him as I would. I trust that he in my latter end will give me more of his Spirit, that I shall love him with all my heart, and soul, and strength. We have entered into the gospel school; we are ignorant now, but we shall one day understand with all saints what are the heights and depths, and lengths, and breadths, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. We have hope that, as these hairs grow grey, we shall "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Time, that ploughs its furrow in the brow, we hope will sow the seeds of wisdom there. Experience, which shall furrow our back with many a sorrow and a wound, shall nevertheless, we trust, work patience, and hope that maketh not ashamed, and holy fellowship with Christ and his sufferings, and nearer and sweeter fellowship than as yet we have come to know. Think -not, Mr. Ready-to-halt, that thou shalt always need thy crutches; there may come days of leaping and of dancing even for thee. Oh, Mistress Despondency, the dungeons of Giant Despair's castle are not to be thy perpetual abode; thou' too, shalt stand upon the top of Mount Clear, and thou shalt see the Celestial City, and the land that is very far off. We are growing things. Methinks I hear the green blade say this morning, 'I shall not for ever be trodden under foot as if I were but grass; I shall grow; I shall blossom; I shall grow ripe and mellow; and many a man

shall sharpen his sickle for me." I hear the little sapling say, "I shall not for  
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ever be shaken to and fro by winds, I shall grow into an old stalwart oak; gnarled though the roots may be, and twisted though my branches are, I shall one day stand and out laugh the tempest, while all its waves of wind break harmlessly over me." I shall be strong through him that strengtheneth me, for I feel a growth within me that can never stop till I have grown to be next to a God — a son of God, a partaker of the Divine nature.

Courage then, courage, I say, brothers and sisters I these weak days are not always to last; we are not to be shorn lambs always, not always the weaklings of his cattle. We shall one day be as the firstlings of his bullocks, and we shall push our enemies to the ends of the earth, and tread upon them and destroy them.

But, further, this cheering prospect upon earth is quite eclipsed by a more cheering prospect beyond the river Death. "Our latter end shall greatly increase." Faith shall give place to fruition; hope shall be occupied with enjoyment; love itself shall be swallowed up in ecstasy. Mine eyes, ye shall not for ever weep; there are sights of transport for you. Tongue, thou shalt not for ever have to mourn, and be the instrument of confession; there are songs and hallelujahs for thee. Feet, ye shall not always be weary with this rough road; there are celestial leapings for you. O my poor heart, oft cowed and broken, often disappointed and trodden down, there waiteth for thee the palm-branch and the robe of victory, and the immortal crown.

*'My spirit leaps across the flood,  
And antedates the hour,'*

when I shall come into possession of these joys which could not belong to my childhood here, but which await me in my manhood up there, when the spirit shall be perfected, and made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Courage, Christian! "The way may be rough, but it cannot be long;" and the end will make amends for all the toil that you can endure when on the road. Oh! quicken thy footsteps, sit not down in despair. Thy latter end shall greatly increase, though thy beginnings be but small.

Perhaps some one may say, "How is it that we are so sure that our latter end will increase?" I give you just these reasons: — we are quite sure of it because there is a vitality in our piety. The sculptor may have oftentimes cut in marble some exquisite statue of a babe. That has come to its full size; it will never grow any greater. When I see a wise man in the world, I look at him as being just such an infant. He will never grow any greater. He has  
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come to his full. He is but chiseled out by human power; there is no Vitality in him. The Christian here on earth is a babe, but not a babe in stone; a babe instinct with life. It is a happy thought sometimes to have of one's self as biting down here, compressed, small, insignificant; and one day Death shall come and say, "Rise to thy proper altitude," and we shall begin to grow and expand; and bursting all our restraints and every limit of humanity, we shall become greater than the angels ate. I think it is

Milton who pictures the spirits in Pandemonium as condensing themselves, so that multitudes of them could sit in a little space, and then at their own volition mounting up till they attained a prodigious height. So is it now. We are tattle spirits, but we shall grow and increase, and we know this because there is life in us — eternal life. Now, the life of twenty years develops itself into something vastly superior to what it was in childhood; and what will the eternal life be when that vitality within us shall make the littleness of our beginning seem as nothing at all, when our latter end shall have greatly increased?

Besides this, we feel that we must come to something better, because God is with us. We are quite certain that what we are, cannot be the end of God's design. When I see a block of marble half chiseled, with just perhaps a hand peeping out from the rock, no man can 'scape me believe that that is what the artist means it should be and I know I am not what God would have me to be, because I feel yearnings and longings within myself to be infinitely better, infinitely holier and purer than I am now. And so is it with you; you are not what God means you to be; you have only just begun to be what he wants you to be. He will go on with his chisel of addition, using wisdom and the graving-tool together, till by-and-by it shall appear what you shall be for, you shall be like him, and you shall see him as he is. Oh! what comfort this is for our faith, that from the fact of our vitality and the fact that God is at work with us, it is clear, and true, and certain, that our latter end shall be increased. I do not think that any man yet has ever got an idea of what a man is to be. We are only the chalk crayon, rough drawings of men, yet when we come to be fined up in eternity, we shall be marvellous pictures, and our latter end indeed shall be greatly increased. And now, one other thought and I will turn to the last point. Christian! remember, for the encouragement of thy poor soul, that what thou art now is not the measure of thy safety; thy safety depends not upon what thou art, but on what Christ is. If the Rock of our salvation were within us, indeed the house would soon be over-turned; but we live by what Christ is.

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***'What Adam had, and forfeited for all,  
That Jesus is, who cannot fail or fall.'***

Till he can falter, my spirit need not tremble; till Jesus sins, till Jesus dies, till Jesus is overcome, till he is powerless with his God, till he ceases to be Divine, the soul that trusts him must be secure. Look not within thee for consolation, but look above, where Jesus pleads before the throne the efficacy of his once-offered blood, and if thou wilt look at thy own state, and then judge thine eternal standing by thine own feelings, or willings, or doings, thou wilt be an undone and miserable wretch. Measure thyself by Jesus' doings, by Jesus' standing, by Jesus' acceptance, by the love of his heart, by the power of his arm, by the Divinity of his nature, by the constancy of his faithfulness, by the acceptance of his blood, by the prevalence of his plea; and so measuring, thy faith need never, never fear

***'For should the earth's old pillar's shake,***



*And all the walls of nature break,  
Our steadfast souls need fear no more  
Than solid rocks when billows roar.”*

**III.** Now for our last point, namely, FOR THE QUICKENING OF OUR DILIGENCE.

It was never intended that the promises of God should make men idle; and when we tell them that their small beginnings shall doubtless come to glorious endings, we tell them this for their encouragement — not that they may sit still and do nothing, but that they may gird up the loins of their mind, confident of their success, to do all that lieth in them, God helping them. Men and brethren, there are many of you here, who, like myself, have to mourn over little beginnings. Let me say to you, be very diligent in the use of those means which God has appointed for your spiritual growth. First, take heed to yourself that you obey the commandments which relate to the ordinances of Christ. Neglect not baptism. True, there is nothing saving in it, nothing meritorious; but baptism is a means of grace. There have been many, who have found, like the eunuch, that when they have been baptized they have gone on their way rejoicing — rejoicing as the effect of grace given when they have obeyed. their Master.

Be careful, too, not to neglect that most blessed Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ. Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the meaner of

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some is, but let him be known to you in the breaking of bread, sad in pouring forth of wine. Do this often in remembrance of him. Ah! I am speaking to some here to day who love Jesus, but who have neglected his last dying injunction, “This do in remembrance of me;” and you have not grown in grace, and are still little in Israel, as you used to be. Do you wonder at it? You have neglected God’s appointed means. “Oh,” saith one, “but I am a spiritual man; I do not need these carnal ordinances.” There is no man so carnal as he who calls God’s ordinances carnal, and no man more spiritual than he who finds spiritual things best brought home to him by what others have ventured to call “beggarly element.” We do not know ourselves if we think we can dispense with these divine signs. Christ knew what was best for us. He has said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized.” He would not have appended the last command if it were not important. He has bidden us also, as oft as we drink the cup, to do it in remembrance of him. He would not have commanded us that, if it were not for our benefit and for his glory.

But further, if thou wouldst get out of the littleness of thy beginnings, wait much upon the means of grace. Read much the Word of God alone. Seek out one who understandeth it well — a man whom God hath taught in it — and listen thou with reverence to the Word as it is preached. Frequent sermons, but prayers most. Praying is the end of preaching. Make use of every means that lieth before thee. Be not like the fool, who calls the books of the old fathers “dead men’s brains.” What God spake to seers of old, what he spoke to mighty men who preached, is not to be thus despised. Read thou as thou canst, and learn as thou canst. Take care, too, that thou

art not content with skimming over a page of Scripture; but seek to get the very marrow out of it. Be not as the butterfly, which flits from flower to flower, but rests nowhere be thou as the bee, which enters the flower-bell, and sucks the honey and bears it off upon its heavily-laden thigh. Rest not till thou hast fed on the Word; and thus shall thy little beginnings come to great endings.

Be much also in prayer. God's plants grow fastest in the warm atmosphere of the closet. The closet is a forcing-place for spiritual vegetation. He who would be well fed and grow strong, must exercise himself upon his knees. Of all training practice for spiritual battles, knee practice is the most healthy and strengthening. Note that, if thou forgettest aught besides.

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And, lastly, if thy beginning be but small, make the best use of the beginning that thou hast. Hast thou but one talent? Put it out at interest, and make two of it. Hast thou two? Seek to have them multiplied into four. Art thou a babe? If thou canst not walk, nor lift, nor carry, thou canst cry. Take care to cry right lustily. Art thou a child? Thou canst not climb; thou canst not as yet teach; but thou canst run. Take care to run in the ways of heavenly-obedience. Art thou a young man? Thou canst not as yet give the reverend advice of hoary age, but be strong, and overcome the wicked one. Art thou an old man? Thou canst not now fight the battles of thy youth, nor lead the van in heroic deeds, but thou canst abide with the stuff, and guard those old doctrines which, like the heavy baggage of the army, must not be lost, for the battle itself should go from us. Every man to his place and to his post. And so by using what we have, we shall gain more. Rivers increase by their onward flow, flames by burning, sunlight increases by the sun's shining, lights by kindling other lights. And so do thou. Do thou grow rich by enriching others — rich by spending. Lengthen out thyself by cutting off the ends that thou canst spare from all thou hast, for it is the way to grow, by giving up that which was an excrescence thou shalt get that which shall be a real growth. Oh! Use thyself, and God shall make use of thee; come out, and God shall lead thee forth. Be a man, and God shall make thee more than an angel, be an angel, and God shall make thee something more. He will make thee better, holier, happier, greater. Oh! do this, and so shall thy latter end be joyous, thy peace shall be like a river, and thy righteousness like the waves of the sea.

Thus, I have spoken this for the comfort of God's people — would that I could hope that all I have said belonged to all of you! but, ah I if it does not, may God convert you, may the new life be given to you! Oh! remember, if you are longing for it, the way of salvation is freely opened to you. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

God bless us now and ever, for Jesus sake. Amen.

# **A BLOW AT SELFRIGHTEOUSNESS.**

NO. 350

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING,  
DECEMBER 16TH, 1860,  
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

*‘If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.’ — Job 9:20.*

EVER since man became a sinner he has been self-righteous. When he had a righteousness of his own he never gloried of it, but ever since he has lost it, he has pretended to be the possessor of it. Those proud words which our father Adam uttered when he sought to screen himself from the guilt of his treason against his Maker, laying the blame apparently on Eve, but really upon God who gave him the woman, were virtually a claim to blamelessness. It was but a fig leaf he could find to cover his nakedness, but how proud was he of that fig-leaf excuse, and how tenaciously did he hold to it. As it was with our first parents so is it with us: self-righteousness is born with us and there is perhaps no sin which has so much vitality in it as the sin of righteous self. We can overcome lust itself, and anger, and the fierce passions of the will better than we can ever master the proud boastfulness which rises in our hearts and tempts us to think ourselves rich and increased in goods, while God knoweth we are naked, and poor, and miserable. Tens of thousands of sermons have been preached against self-righteousness, and yet it is as necessary to turn the great guns of the law against its walls today as ever it was. Martin Luther said he scarcely ever preached a sermon without inveighing against the righteousness of man, and yet, he said, ‘I find that still I cannot preach it down. Still men will boast in what they can do, and mistake the path to heaven to be a road paved by their own merits, and not a way besprinkled

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by the blood of the atonement of Jesus Christ.’ My dear hearers, I cannot compliment you by imagining that all of you have been delivered from the great delusion of trusting in yourselves. The godly, those who are righteous through faith in Christ, still have to mourn that this infirmity clings to them; while as to the unconverted themselves, their besetting sin is to deny their guiltiness, to plead that they are as good as others, and to indulge still the vain and foolish hope that they shall enter into heaven from some doings, sufferings, or weepings of their own. I do not suppose there are any who are self-righteous in as bold a sense as the poor countryman I have heard of. His minister had tried to explain to him the way of salvation, but either his head was very dull, or else his soul was very hostile to the truth the minister would impart; for he so little understood what he had heard, that when the question was put, ‘Now then, what is the way by which you hope you can be saved before God?’ the poor honest simpleton said, ‘Do you not think sir, if I were to sleep one cold frosty night under a hawthorn bush, that would go a great way towards it?’ conceiving that his

suffering might, in some degree at least, assist him in getting into heaven. You would not state your opinion in so bold a manner; you would refine it, you would gild it, you would disguise it, but it would come to the same thing after all; you would still believe that some sufferings, repentings, or believings of your own might possibly merit salvation. The Romish Church indeed, often tells this so very plainly, that we cannot think it less than profanity. I have been informed that there is in one of the Romish chapels in Cork, a monument bearing these words upon it, ‘I. H. S. Sacred to the memory of the benevolent Edward Molloy; a friend of humanity, the father of the poor, he employed the wealth of this world only to procure the riches of the next, and leaving a balance of merit in the book of life, he made heaven debtor to mercy. He died October 17th, 1818, aged 90.’ I do not suppose that any of you will have such an epitaph on your tombstones, or ever dream of putting it as a matter of account with God, and striking a balance with him your sins being on one side and your righteousness on the other, and hoping that a balance might remain. And yet the very same idea, only not so honestly expressed — a little more guarded, and a little more refined — the same idea, only taught to speak after a gospel dialect — is inherent in us all, and only divine grace can thoroughly cast it out of us. The sermon of this morning is intended to be another blow against our selfrighteousness. If it will not die, at least let us spare no arrows against it; let

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us draw the bow, and if the shaft cannot penetrate its heart, it may at least stick in its flesh and help to worry it to its grave.

**I.** Endeavoring to keep close to my text, I shall start with this first point — that THE PLEA OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS CONTRADICTS ITSELF. ‘If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me.’

Come, friend, thou who dost justify thyself by thine own works, let me hear thee speak. ‘I say that I have no need of a salvation by the blood and righteousness of another, for I believe that I have kept the commands of God from my youth up, and I do not think that I am guilty in his sight, but I hope that I may be able in my own right to claim a seat in paradise.’ Now, sir, your plea and this declaration of yours is in itself a condemnation of you, because upon its very surface it is apparent that you *are committing sin while you are pleading that you have no sin*. For the very plea itself is a piece of high and arrogant presumption. God hath said it, let Jew and Gentile stop his mouth, and let all the world stand guilty before God. We have it on inspired authority, that ‘there is none righteous, no, not one.’ ‘There is none good, save one, that is God.’ We are told by the mouth of a prophet sent from God, that ‘all we like wandering sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.’ And thou, in saying that thou art righteous, dost commit the sin of calling God a liar. Thou hast dared to impugn his veracity, thou hast slandered his justice. This boast of thine is in itself a sin, so great, so heinous, that if thou hadst only that one sin to account for, it would be sufficient to sink thee to the lowest hell. The boast, I say, is in itself a sin, the moment that a man saith,

“I have no sin,” he commits a sin in the saying of it, — the sin of contradicting his Maker, and making God a false accuser of his creatures. Besides, dost thou not see, thou vain and foolish creature, that thou hast been guilty of *pride* in the very language thou hast used? Who but a proud man would stand up and commend himself? Who, but one who was proud as Lucifer, would in the face of God’s declaration declare himself to be just and holy? Did the best of men ever speak thus? Did they not all of them acknowledge that they were guilty? Did Job of whom God said that he was a perfect and an upright man, claim perfection? Did he not say, “If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me?” Oh! proud wretch, how art thou puffed up! How hath Satan bewitched thee, how hath he made thee lift up thine horn on high and speak with a stiff neck. Take heed to thyself, for if thou hadst never been guilty before, this pride of thine were quite

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sufficient to draw Jehovah’s thunderbolts out of the quiver, and make him smite thee once for all to thine eternal destruction.

But further, the plea of self-righteousness is self-contradictory upon another ground for all that a self-righteous man pleads for, is *comparative* righteousness. “Why,” saith he, “I am no worse than my neighbors, in fact a great deal better; I do not drink, or swear; I do not commit fornication or adultery; I am no Sabbath breaker, I am no thief; the laws of my country do not accuse, much less condemn me, I am better than the most of men, and if I be not saved, God help those who are worse than I am; if I cannot enter the kingdom of heaven, then who can? “Just so, but then all that you claim is that you are righteous as compared with others. Do you not see that this is a very vain and fatal plea, because you do in fact admit that you are not *perfectly* righteous, — that there is *some* sin in you, only you claim there is not so much in you as in another. You admit that you are diseased, but then the plague-spot is not so apparent in you as in your fellow-man. You admit that you have robbed God and have broken his laws, only you have not done it with so desperate an intent, nor with so many aggravations as others. Now this is virtually a plea of guilty, disguise it as you may. You admit that you have been guilty, and against you the sentence comes forth — “*The soul that sinneth it shall die.*” Take heed to thyself that thou find no shelter in this refuge of lies, for it shall certainly fail thee when God shall come to judge the world with righteousness and the people with equity. Suppose now for a moment that a command is issued to the beasts of the forest that they should become sheep. It is quite in vain for the bear to come forward and plead that he was not so venomous a creature as the serpent, equally absurd would it be for the wolf to say that though stealthy and cunning, and gaunt, and grim, yet he was not so great a grumbler nor so ugly a creature as the bear, and the lion might plead that he had not the craftiness of the fox. “It is true,” saith he, “I wet my tongue in blood, but then I have some virtues which may commend me, and which, in fact, have made me king of beasts.” What would this argument avail? The indictment is that these animals are not sheep, their plea against the indictment is that they are no less like sheep than other creatures, and that some of them have

more gentleness and more docility than others of their kind. The plea would never stand. Or use another picture. If in the courts of justice, a thief, when called up, should argue, "Well, I am not so great a thief as some; there are to be found some living in Whitechapel or St. Giles's who have been thieves longer than I have, and if there be one conviction in the

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book against me, there are some that have a dozen convictions against them." No magistrate would acquit a man on such an excuse as that, because it would be tantamount to his admission of a degree of guilt, though he might try to excuse himself because he had not reached a higher degree. It is so with you, sinner. You have sinned. Another man's sins cannot excuse you, you must stand upon your own feet. At the day of judgment you must yourself make a personal appearance, and it will not be what another man has done that will condemn, or acquit you, but your own personal guilt. Take heed, then take heed, sinner, for it will not avail thee that there are others blacker than thyself. If there be but a spot upon thee thou art lost, if there be but one sin unwashed by Jesus' blood, thy portion must be with the tormentors. A holy God cannot look even upon the least degree of iniquity.

But further, the plea of the self-conceited man is, that he has done his best, and can claim a *partial* righteousness. It is true, if you touch him in a tender place he acknowledges that his boyhood and his youth were stained with sin. He tells you that in his early days he was a "fast lad," that he did many things which he is sorry for now. "But then," says he, "these are only like spots in the sun; these are only like a small headland of waste ground in acres of fruitful soil; I am still good, I am still righteous, because my virtues exceed my vices, and my good deeds quite cover up all the mistakes that I have committed." Well, sir, do you not see that the only righteousness you claim is a *partial* righteousness? and in that very claim you do in fact make an admission that you are not perfect; that you have committed some sins. Now I am not responsible for what I am about to state, nor am I to be blamed for harshness in it, because I state neither more nor less than the very truth of God. It is of no saving avail to you that you have not have committed ten thousand sins, for if you have committed one you are a lost soul. The law is to be kept intact and entire, and the least crack or flaw, or breakage, spoils it. The robe of righteousness in which you must stand at last must be without spot or blemish, and if there be but one microscopic stain upon it, which is supposing what is never true, yet, even then the gates of heaven never can admit you. A perfect righteousness you must have, or else you shall never be admitted to that wedding feast. You may say, "I have kept such a commandment and have never broken it," but if you have broken another you are guilty of the whole, because the whole law is like one rich and costly vase — it is one in design and fashion. Though you break not the foot, and stain not the margin, yet if there be any

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flaw or damage, the whole vessel is marred. And so if you have sinned in any point, at any time, and in any degree, you have broken the whole law,

you stand guilty of it before God, nor can you be saved by the works of the law, do what you may.

‘It is a hard sentence,’ says one, ‘and who can bear it!’ Indeed, who *can* bear it? Who can bear to stand at the foot of Sinai and hear its thunders roar? ‘If so much as a beast touch the mountain it must be stoned or thrust through with a dart.’ Who can stand when the lightnings flash and God descends upon Mount Paran and the hills melt like wax beneath his feet? ‘By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh living be justified.’ ‘Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the law to do them.’ Cursed is the man who sins but once, yea, hopelessly cursed so far as the law is concerned. Oh! sinner, I cannot help turning aside from the subject for a moment to remind you that there is a way of salvation, and a way by which the law’s demands can be fully satisfied. *Christ* bore all the punishment of all believers, so that they cannot be punished. Christ kept the law of God for believers, and he is willing to cast about any and every penitent sinner that perfect robe of righteousness which he himself has wrought out. But *you* cannot keep the law, and if you bring up your self-righteousness the law condemns both it and you; Out of your own mouth it condemns you, inasmuch as you have not done all things and have not kept all the law. A great rock lies in your path to heaven, a mountain insurmountable; a gulf impassable; and by that road no man shall ever enter into eternal life.

The plea of self-righteousness, then, is in itself self-contradicting, and has only to be fairly stated to an honest man for him to see that it will not hold water for a single moment. What need of labored argument to disprove a self-evident lie? Why should we tarry longer? Who but a very fool would maintain a notion which dies in its own face and witnesses against itself?

## **II.** But now I pass to the second point, THE MAN WHO USES THIS PLEA CONDEMNS THE PLEA HIMSELF.

Not only does the plea cut its own throat, but the man himself is aware when he uses it that it is an evil, and false, and vain refuge. Now this is a matter of conscience and therefore I must deal plainly with you, and if I speak not what you have felt, then you can say I am mistaken, but if I speak what you must confess to be true, let it be as the very voice of God to you. Men *know* that they are guilty. The conscience of the proudest

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man, when it is allowed to speak, tells him that he deserves the wrath of God. He may brag in public, but the very loudness of his bragging proves that he has an uneasy conscience, and therefore he makes a mighty din in order to drown its voice. Whenever I hear an infidel saying hard things of Christ, it reminds me of the men of Moloch, who beat the drums that they might not hear the screams of their own children. These loud blasphemies, these braggart boastings, are only a noisy way of drowning the shrieks of conscience. Do not believe that these men are honest. I think all controversy with them is time thrown away. I would never controvert with a thief about the principles of honesty, or with a known adulterer



concerning the duty of chastity. Devils are not to be reasoned with, but to be cast out. Parleying with hell serves no one's turn except the devil's. Did Paul argue with Elymas? or Peter with Simon Magus? I would not cross swords with a man who says there is no God, *he knows there is a God*. When a man laughs at Holy Scripture, you need not argue with him, he is either a fool or a knave — perhaps both. However villainous he may be, his conscience has some light; he knows that what he speaks is untrue. I cannot believe that conscience is so dead in any man as to let him believe that he is speaking the truth when he denies the Godhead; and much more I am certain that conscience never did give assent to the utterance of the braggart, who says he deserves eternal life, or has no sin of which to repent, or which by repentance may be washed away without the blood of Christ, he knows within himself that he speaks that which is false. When Professor Webster was shut up in prison for murder, he complained to the prison authorities that he had been insulted by his fellow-prisoners, for he said that through the walls of the prison he could hear them always crying out to him, "Thou bloody man! thou bloody man!" As it was not consistent with law that one prisoner should insult another, the strictest enquiry was made, and it was found that no prisoner had ever said such a word, or that if he had said it, Webster could not have heard it. It was his own conscience; it was not a word coming through the walls of the prison, but an echo reverberating from the wall of his bad heart, as conscience shouted, "Thou bloody man! thou bloody man!" There is in all your hearts a witness who will not cease his testimony, it cries "Thou sinful man! thou sinful man!" You have only to listen to it, and you will soon find that every pretense of being saved by your good works must crumble to the ground. Oh! hear it now, and listen to it for a moment. I am sure *my* conscience says, "Thou sinful man! thou sinful man!" and I think yours must say the

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same, unless you are given up of God, and left to a seared conscience to perish in your sins.

When men get alone, if in their loneliness the thought of death forces itself upon them, they boast no more of goodness. It is not easy for a man to lie on his bed seeing the naked face of death, not at a distance, but feeling that his breath is breathing upon the skeleton, and that he must soon pass through the iron gates of death — it is not easy for a man to plead his self-righteousness then. The bony fingers thrust themselves like daggers into his proud flesh. "Ah!" saith grim Death, in tones which cannot be heard by mortal ear, but which are listened to by the mortal heart — "Where now are all thy glories?" He looks upon the man, and the wreath of laurel that was upon his brow fades and falls to the earth like blasted flowers. He touches his breast, and the star of honor which he wore moulders and is quenched into darkness. He looks at him yet again — that breast-plate of self-righteousness which glittered upon him like golden mail, suddenly dissolves into dust, like the apples of Sodom before the touch of the gatherer, and the man finds himself to his own surprise naked, and poor, and miserable, when most he needed to be rich, when most he required to

be happy and to be blessed. Ay, sinner, even while this sermon is being uttered, you may seek to refute it to yourself, and say, "Well, I believe I am as good as others and that this fuss about a new birth, imputed righteousness, and being washed in blood, is all unnecessary," but in the loneliness of your silent chamber, especially when death shall be your dread and grim companion, you shall not need me to state this, you shall see it clearly enough yourselves, see it with eyes of horror; and feel it with a heart of dismay, and despair, and perish because thou hast despised the righteousness of Christ.

How abundantly true, however, will this be at the day of judgment. I think I see that day of fire, that day of wrath. You are gathered as a great multitude before the eternal throne. Those who are robed in Christ's fine linen, which is the righteousness of the saints, are caught up to the right hand. And now the trumpet sounds, if there be any that have kept the law of God, if there be faultless ones, if there be any that have never sinned, let them stand forth and claim the promised reward, but, if not, let the pit engulf the sinner, let the fiery thunder-bolt be launched upon the impenitent offenders. Now, stand forth, sir and clear thyself! Come forth, my friend, and claim the reward, because of the church you endowed, or the row of almshouses that you erected. What! what! does your tongue lie

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dumb in your mouth? Come forward, come forward — you who said you had been a good citizen, had fed the hungry, and clothed the naked — come forward now, and claim the reward. What! what! is your face turned to whiteness? Is there an ashy paleness on your cheek? Come forward, ye multitudes of those who rejected Christ, and despised his blood. Come now, and say, "All the commandments have I kept from my youth up." What! are you seized with horror? Has the better light of judgment driven out the darkness of your self-righteousness? Oh! I see you, I see you, ye are not boasting now; but you, the best of you, are crying, "Ye rocks, hide me; ye mountains, open your stony bowels, and let me hide myself from the face of him that sits upon the throne." Why, why such a coward? Come, face it out before your Maker. Come up, infidel, now, tell God there is no God. Come, while hell is flaming in your nostrils; come, and say there is no hell; or tell the Almighty that you never could bear to hear a hell-fire sermon preached. Come now, and accuse the minister of cruelty, or say that we love to talk on these terrible themes. Let me not mock you in your misery; but let me picture to you how devils shall mock you. "Aha!" say they "where is your courage now? Are your ribs of iron and your bones of brass? Will you dare the Almighty now, and dash yourselves upon the bosses of his buckler, or run upon his glittering spear?" See them, see them as they sink! The gulf has swallowed them up; the earth has closed again, and they are gone, a solemn silence falls upon the ear. But hark below, if you could descend with them, you would hear their doleful groans, and hollow moans, as they now feel that the God omnipotent was right and just, and wise, and tender, when he bade them forsake their righteousness, and flee to Christ, and lay hold on him that can save to the uttermost them

that come unto God by him.

### III. THE PLEA IS ITSELF EVIDENCE AGAINST THE PLEADER.

There is an unregenerated man here, who says, "Am I blind also?" I answer in the words of Jesus, "But now ye say we see, therefore your sin remaineth." You have proved by your plea, in the first place, that you have never been enlightened of the Holy Spirit, but that you remain in a state of ignorance. A deaf man may declare that there is no such thing as music. A man who has never seen the stars, is very likely to say that there are no stars. But what does he prove? Does he prove that there are no stars? He only proves his own folly and his own ignorance. That man who can say half a word about his own righteousness has never been enlightened of God the Holy Spirit; for one of the first signs of a renewed heart is, that it

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abhors itself in dust and ashes. If thou dost to-day feel thyself to be guilty, and lost, and ruined, there is the richest hope for thee in the gospel but if thou sayest, "*I am good*, I have merits," the law condemns thee, and the gospel cannot comfort thee, thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity, and thou art ignorant that all the while thou art talking thus, the wrath of God abideth on thee. A man *may* be a true Christian, and *may* fall into sin, but a man cannot be a true Christian and boast in his selfrighteousness.

A man may be saved, though infirmity may bespatter him with much mire; but *he* cannot be saved who does not know that he has been in the filth, and is not willing to confess that he is guilty before God. There are, in one sense, no conditions of salvation on our part, for whatever may be conditions God gives; but thus I know, there never was a man yet who was in a state of grace who did not know himself, in himself, to be in a state of ruin, a state of depravity and condemnation. If you do not know this, then I say your plea of self-righteousness condemns you for ignorance.

But then again, inasmuch as you say that you are not guilty, this proves that you are impenitent. Now the impenitent can never come where God is. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins;" "but if we say that we have no sins, we make God a liar, and the truth is not in us." God will pardon all men who confess their iniquity. If we weep and lament, and take with us words, and say, "We have grievously sinned, forgive us — we have greatly erred, have mercy upon us, through Jesus Christ," God will not refuse the cry; but if we, out of our impenitent and hard hearts, put ourselves upon God's justice, God will give us justice, but not mercy, and that justice shall be the meting out to us of the full vials of his indignation, and of his wrath for ever and ever. He that is self-righteous is impenitent, and therefore he is not, and cannot be saved.

Further than this, the self-righteous man, the moment that he says he has done anything which can recommend him to God, proves that he is not a believer. Now, salvation is for believers, and for believers only "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." Sir, you will be damned with all your self-righteousness, and

your self righteousness shall be like Dejanira's tunic, which she gave to Hercules, and which he put upon him, and, as the old fable hath it, it became a robe of fire to him; he tried to drag it away, but he pulled away pieces of his living, quivering flesh each moment, and perished miserably. Such shall your self-righteousness be to you. It seems a pleasant draught,  
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and intoxicates for the moment; it is deadly and damnable as the venom of asps, and as the wine of Gomorrah. O soul! would that thou wouldst flee, above all things, from self-righteousness; for a self-righteous man does not and cannot trust Christ, and therefore he cannot see the face of God. None but the naked man will ever go to Christ for clothing; none but the hungry men will ever take Christ to be his food; none but thirsty souls will ever come to this well of Bethlehem to drink. The thirsty are welcome; but those who think they are good, are welcome neither to Sinai nor to Calvary. They have no hope of heaven, no peace in this world, nor in that which is to come.

Ah! soul, I know not who thou art; but if thou hast any righteousness of thine own, thou art a graceless soul. If you have given all your goods to feed the poor; if you have built many and many a sanctuary; if you have gone about with self-denial among the houses of poverty to visit the sons and daughters of affliction; if you have fasted thrice in the week; if your prayers have been so long that your throat has become hoarse through your crying; if your tears have been so many that your eyes have become blinded through your weeping; if your readings of Scripture have been so long that the midnight oil has been consumed in abundance; — if, I say, your heart has been so tender towards the poor and the sick and the needy that you would have been willing to suffer with them, to bear all their loathsome diseases, nay, if adding all this you could give your body to be burned, yet if you trusted in any one of these things your damnation would be as sure as though you were thief or drunkard. Understand me, I mean what I say. I want you not to think I speak unguardedly now. Christ said of the Pharisees of old the very thing that I have said of you. They were good and excellent in their way; but, said he, the publicans and harlots enter the kingdom of God before *you*, because they *would* go the wrong way, while the poor publicans and harlots were led to go the right way. The Pharisee who went about to make a righteousness of his own, did not submit to the righteousness of Christ; the publican and the harlot, knowing that they had nothing whereof to glory, came to Christ and took him as he was, and gave their souls up to be saved by his grace. Oh! that we may do the same; for until we get rid of self-righteousness we are in a state of condemnation, and dying, the sentence must be executed upon us for ever and ever.

**IV.** I close now upon the last point, namely, that this plea, if we retain it, not only accuses the pleader now, but **IT WILL RUIN THE PLEADER FOREVER.**

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Let me show you two suicides. There is a man who has sharpened a dagger and seeking out his opportunity he stabs himself to the heart. There he

falls. Who shall blame any man for his death? He slew himself; his blood be on his own head.

Here is another: he is very sick and ill; he can scarcely crawl about the streets. A physician waits upon him; he tells him, "Sir, your disease is deadly; you must die; but I know a remedy which will certainly heal you. There it is; I freely give it to you. All I ask of you is, that you will freely take it." "Sir," says the man, "you insult me; I am as well as ever I was in my life; I am not sick" "But," says the other, "there are certain signs which I mark in your countenance which prove to me that you will have a deadly disease about you, and I warn you." The man thinks a moment; remembers that there have been certain signs in him of this very sickness; a monitor within tells him that it is so. He obstinately replies to the physician a second time — "Sir, if I want your physic I will send for it, and if I need it I will pay for it." He knows all the while there is not a farthing in his pocket, and that he cannot get credit anywhere; and there stands the life-giving cup before him which the physician at great expense has obtained, but which he freely gives to him and bids him freely take. "No," says the man, "I will not take it; I maybe somewhat sick, but I am not worse than my neighbors; I am not more ill than other people, and I shall not take it." One day you go to his bed and you find he has slept his last sleep, and there he lies stone dead. Who slew this man? Who killed him? His blood be on his own head; he is as base a suicide as the other.

Now I will show you two more suicides. There is a man here who says — "Well I et what will happen in the next world, I will have my fill in this. Tell me where there are pleasures to be had and I will have them. Leave the things of God to old fools, and such like; I shall have the things of the present, and the joys and delights of time." He drains the cup of drunkenness, frequents the haunt of folly, and if he knows where there is any vice pursued he rushes after it. Like Byron; he is a very thunderbolt, launched from the hand of an arch-fiend; he flashes through the whole firmament of sin, and blazes himself out, until decayed in body and soul, he dies. He is a suicide. He defied God, he went against the laws of nature and of grace, despised warnings, declared he would be damned, and he has got what he richly deserved.

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Here is another. He says, "I despise these vices; I am the most upright, honest, and commendable of men. I feel that I do not need salvation, and if I did need it I could get it myself. I can do anything you tell me to do, I feel I have mental force and manly dignity enough remaining in me to accomplish it. I tell you, sir, you insult me when you bid me trust in Christ." "Well," he says, "I consider there is such dignity in manhood, and so much virtue in me, that I need not a new heart nor will I succumb and bend my spirit to the gospel of Christ on free-grace terms." Very well sir, when in hell you lift up your eyes, and you *will do so* as surely as the most profligate and profane, your blood will be upon your own head; and you will be as truly a suicide as he who wantonly and wickedly dashed himself against the laws of God and man, and brought himself to a sudden and

hasty end by his iniquity and crimes.

“Well,” says one, “this is a sermon well adapted to self-righteous persons, but I am not one.” Then what are you, sir? Are you a believer in Christ? “I cannot say I am, sir.” Why are you not, then? “Well, I would be, but I am afraid I may not believe in Christ.” You are self-righteous, sir. God commands you to believe in Christ, and you say you are not fit. Now what does this mean but that you are waiting to make yourself fit, and this after all is the spirit of self-righteousness; you are so proud that you will not take Christ unless you think you can bring something to him — that is it “Ah! no,” says one poor broken-hearted soul, “I do not think that is fair with me, for I do feel as if I would give anything, if I might hope to be saved; but oh, I am such a wretch! I am such a wretch! I cannot believe.” Now, that after all is self-righteousness. Christ bids you trust him. You say, “No, I will not trust thee, Christ, because I am such-an-one and such-an-one.” So, then, you are wanting to make yourself somebody, and then Jesus Christ is to do the rest. It is the same spirit of self-righteousness only in another garb. “Ah!” saith one, “but if I did but feel my need enough, as you just now said, sir, then I think I would trust Christ.” Self-righteousness again, you want your sense of need to save you. “Oh! but, sir, I cannot believe in Christ as I would.” Self-righteousness again. Let me just utter a solemn sentence which you may masticate at your leisure. If you trust to your faith and to your repentance, you will be as much lost as if you trusted to your good works or trusted to your sins. The ground of your salvation is not *faith*, but *Christ*; it is not repentance, but Christ. If I trust my trust of Christ, I am lost. My business is to trust Christ; to rest on him; to depend, not on what the Spirit has done in me, but what Christ did for

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me, when he did hang upon the tree. Now be it known unto you, that when Christ died, he took the sins of all his people upon his head, and there and then they all ceased to be. At the moment when Christ died, the sins of all his redeemed were blotted out. He did then suffer all they ought to have suffered; he paid all their debts; and their sins were actually and positively lifted that day from *their* shoulders to *his* shoulders, for “the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” And now, if you believe in Jesus, there is not a sin remaining upon you, for your sin was laid on Christ; Christ was punished for your sins before they were committed, and as Kent says:

***‘Here’s pardon for transgressions past,  
It matters not how black their caste;  
And oh! my soul with wonder view,  
For sins to come here’s pardon too.’***

Blessed privilege of the believer! But if you live and die unbelievers, know this, that all your sins lie on your own shoulders. Christ did never make any atonement for you; you were never bought with blood; you never had an interest in his sacrifice. You live and die in yourselves, lost; in yourselves, ruined; in yourselves utterly destroyed. But believing — the moment you believe, you may know that you were chosen of God from before the foundation of the world. Believing, you may know that the righteousness

of Christ is all yours; that all he did, he did for you; that all he suffered, he suffered for you. You do in fact, in the moment you believe, stand where Christ stood as God's accepted Son; and Christ stands where you stood as the sinner, and suffers as if he had been the sinner, and dies as if he had been guilty — dies in your room, place, and stead.

Oh! Spirit of God, give faith this morning. Win us all from self; knit us all to Christ; may we be saved now by his free grace, and be saved in eternity.

# FALSE JUSTIFICATION AND TRUE.

NO. 2932

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*‘If I justify myself, mine on mouth shall condemn me.’ -Job 9:20.*

*‘It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?’ — Romans 8:33, 34.*

THE great question for the human race to answer has ever been this, ‘How can man be just with God? ‘It is clear to every conscience that is at all awake that the thrice-holy God demands obedience to his law, and that disobedience to the divine law will certainly entail punishment. Hence the grand essential for each one of us is to be right towards God, — to be accounted just even at his judgment bar. This is a most important matter at all times, but it appears to increase in importance as we advance in years, and get nearer to that great testing time when the Lord shall put everyone into his unerring balances, to weigh him, and so to prove what he really is. Woe unto the man who shall stand before the bar of God unjustified; but happy shall he be who, in that last, dread day, shall be approved and accepted by the Judge of all the earth.

I am going to speak about the way in which we are justified in the sight of God, and I have taken two texts because so many people seem to have thought that these are two ways by which sinners can be justified before God. The first way that I shall describe is the false one, the second is the true way; the first is that which is mentioned by Job, the way of self-

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justification, of which it may be truly said that it is self-condemning instead of self-justifying. The second mode of justification is the one that is ordained by God, and of that it may rightly said that it never can be condemned. It challenges heaven and earth and hell in those grand words which I have just read to you, ‘It is God that justifieth. Who is he that



condemneth?”

**I.** First, for a few minutes, let us consider THE SELF-JUSTIFICATION OF WHICH JOB SPEAKS: “If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me.”

I call to your remembrance the fact that it is Job who speaks thus, because, if there ever was a man, in this world, who might have been justified before God by his own works, it was Job. Did not the Lord himself say of him to Satan, “There is none like him in the earth, a perfect, and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil”? Yet, so far was Job from imagining that he had attained a sinless condition, that he here declares concerning himself, “If I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul: I would despise my life.” In addition to Job’s excellence of character, he paid devout attention to religious observance. When his children met together for feasting, he ordered special sacrifices on their behalf, saying, “It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts.” Job was evidently as devout towards God as he was upright towards man; yet, you see, he tells us that, if he were to justify himself, his own mouth would condemn him. Further, as if to show us how notable Job was in all respects, he had, in addition to his excellent character, all his devotional spirit, most remarkable afflictions; but, putting together all his good works, all his religious observances, and all his afflictions, he says, “If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me.” Job, at any rate, was not one of those who have imagined that they could work out a righteousness of their own which could be acceptable in the sight of God.

Let us try to find out what he meant when he said, “If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me. I think he meant, first, that *it would not be true*. He could not, and dare not say that he was just, before God; it would be a lie for him to stand up before the Lord, and say, “Great God, I deserve commendation at thy hands, for in me is found true righteousness.”

Instead of talking like that, Job says, “If I were to say that, my own mouth would contradict me while I was trying to say it. I could not say it; I dare

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not say it.” I hope there are many here who feel that, to talk about any righteousness of their own, would be utterly absurd. If I were to attempt to justify myself before God, I should have to do so by my conscience, my self-knowledge, and my whole being. Whatever anyone else may think or say, I know that I must be saved by the grace of God, or else that I shall never be saved at all. I have not done a single good work in which I cannot see any faults, — not one solitary thing which I cannot perceive to be marred and stained, and, like a vessel spoiled even while it is on the potter’s wheel, not fit to be presented before God at all. That is what Job meant when he said, “If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me.”

But he meant, next, that *his words themselves would be sufficient to condemn him*. I know that I am addressing a large number of persons whose lives are apparently blameless. The most observant critic here would

be unable to bring any very grave or serious charge against you; and yet, my dear friend, if you were to try to justify yourself before God, your words themselves would be enough to condemn you, for what sort of words do you use? I do not suppose that you use profane words; I will not imagine that you take the name of God in vain; though, alas! that is a sin that is not at all uncommon. But do you not often utter proud, boastful words? Do you not often speak in a very lofty way concerning yourselves and your own doing? Do we not all use far too many light and trifling words, — not merely such as cheerfulness may warrant, but such as are a mere waste of time, diverting the mind from serious purposes? And did not our Lord Jesus Christ say that, “Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment”? And, friend, let me whisper other questions in thine ear. Dost thou never use words of a very doubtful kind? Is it not far too common in society for people to go to the very verge of propriety in what they say? Have you never done so? And have you never used false words? Have you always spoken the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? Has your heart always gone with your tongue? Have there been no false compliments, — no lying expressions of an affection that you never felt? I wish that certain people would more often go to the looking-glass, and examine their tongues. Doctors judge of their patients health by looking at their tongues, and we might judge of our moral and spiritual health in a similar way. Oh, what tongues some people would have if their words could blister their tongues as they ought to do! How common it is to hear scandalous words, and slanderous words, and how many hearts are made to bleed, full often, by

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the cruel things that are said!” If I justify myself,” says Job, “mine own mouth shall condemn me,” and I think he means, “because my very words have been sufficient to cause me to plead guilty before God.” I trust we also feel like that; and if we do, we shall never dare to be self-righteous. I think, further, that Job meant that, if he were to plead that he was righteous before God, he would be sure to make such a muddled statement that, somehow or other, *the statement itself would contain its own condemnation*. If a man says, “I have kept God’s law perfectly, so I can enter heaven by the merit of my own good works,” every intelligent person thinks, “What a proud man that is?” And can a proud man be accepted before God? Is it not written, “Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off”? So you see that a statement of justification by betraying the pride of our heart, straightway condemns us. Men who believe themselves to be saved by their own good works generally have something harsh and evil to say against God’s grace, or against his Son, or against the divine plan of salvation through the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ; and the very fact that they say anything against those things shows that their heart is in rebellion against God, and therefore their own mouth condemns them. Years ago, there was, as old man, in Wiltshire, who according to his own statement, was a hundred and three years of age, he had never neglected

his parish church, he had brought up eleven children, and had no help from the parish, and he expected that, by-and-by, he should go home to God, for 'he had never done anything wrong in his life that he knowed about.' 'But,' said someone to him, 'you are a sinner, you know.' 'I know I ain't,' he said. 'Well, but God says that you are.' And what, think you, did that old man reply? He said, 'God may say what he likes, but I know I ain't.' So, you see, he even contradicted God himself, and is not that a great sin for anybody to commit? What worse sin can there be, and what clearer proof of the alienation of the human heart, than that a man should flatly contradict God? Well, none of you ever did that, did you? No, you have not honesty enough to do that, but you mean it all the same. Many of you mean it, in your very souls. When a man does not accept salvation by Jesus Christ, if you probe his heart to its very depths, you will find that his rejection means that he does not really feel that he is guilty in the sight of God. He will not own that he needs divine mercy, nor will he accept salvation by the blood and righteousness of Christ. Self-righteousness often

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lies concealed far down in the heart of man; but whenever he ventures to speak it out, the very way in which he talks of it condemns him. I have heard men talk in this fashion, — 'Well, I am quite as good as others are; and if I am not all right at last, it will be a very bad look-out for a great many.' Oh, yea, I see what you mean; because others are not what they should be, you are content with your own condition because you are like them. There is no fear of God before your eyes; and your only hope is that, as you are like others, it will be as well with you as it will be with them! But is not that a poor hope to lean upon? Do you not know that the broad road is thronged with travelers, and yet that it leads to destruction? Even if you fare as others do, it will be no comfort to you to perish as they do. There is a very ancient declaration, which ought to be a warning to you: 'Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished.' 'Well,' says another, 'I have done my best, and I cannot do more than that.' When you speak like that, you mean to imply that God asks of you more than he ought to ask, that really he is unjust, in his dealings with you, and that the great evil is not that you are a bad servant, but that he is a tyrant Master. What is that but flinging down the gauntlet to the Almighty, and charging him with injustice. Such language as that betrays the enmity of your heart against the Most High. 'Well,' says another, 'I pay everybody all that is due.' I am glad that you do, so, and wish everybody else did the same; but have you paid to God all that is due to him? There is the great flaw in your life, — you pay every creditor except your God, to whom you owe all that you have. Many a man, who would not illtreat this dog, does not mind illtreating his God. The last one of whom many of you think is your Creator, and Provider, and Perseverer, the God who keeps the breath of life in your nostrils. You give some sort of consideration to their meanest servant in your kitchen; but to him who made the heavens and the earth, to him who sustains all things by the word of his power, you pay no regard whatsoever. As this is the real

meaning of your attempt at self-justification, it carries its condemnation upon its very surface.

“Still,” says one, “whatever I may seem to be, I am reasonably good at heart.” Ah! that is another of the sayings that I have often heard, but I have never yet been able to believe that a man could be bad in life, yet good at heart. It is sometimes said of a man, who dies drunk, and cursing his Maker, “Ah, he was a good fellow at bottom.” That is not the way that

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men talk in the market. If you go to buy a barrel of apples, and see a lot of rotten and spoiled ones at the top of the barrel, do you believe the salesman when he says, “Ah, but the apples underneath are very good ones”? Of course, you do not believe anything of the kind; you always reckon that the fruit below is worse than that at the top, for the universal practice is to put the best at the top, and the poorer quality underneath. In like manner, we do not believe the man who says that he is good at bottom, and good at heart, although his life is evil. No, sir, you are even worse in heart than you ever were in life, because there are many things that restrain you from revealing your naked self to these who only see your outward life. But your sin is there, down at the bottom of your heart; and if you attempt to justify yourself in the sight of God, the very statement that you make will condemn you.

Besides so conscious are men that their own good works will not justify them before God, that *I do not remember ever meeting with a person who absolutely professed to be at peace with God as the result of his own endeavors*. If I were to ask any man, who says that he is righteous simply because of what he has himself done or been, “Are you prepared to die?” he would shake his head, and say, “Oh, no! I am not prepared to die.” You say that you have done nothing wrong, and that you are aright. But suppose that, to-morrow, you were to be called to stand at God’s judgement-bar, would you feel comfortable in the prospect? “Oh, no!” you say. I felt sure that must be your answer. Indeed, all the religions, in the world that teach the doctrine of salvation by works are at least honest enough not to pretend to ensure for any man present salvation. Take, for instance, that gigantic form of error, the Romish system of religion. It never tells anybody that he is saved. There is not a cardinal, though he is called a prince of the church, and there is not a pope, though he is called Christ’s vicar on earth, who dares to say that he is saved. They have some kind of faint hope that they may be saved at some future period, but there are none of them who dare to say that they are already saved. As to using the language of the apostle Paul, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” — language which even boys and girls in our Sunday-school can use as soon as they have believed in Jesus Christ, — well, even the greatest and the wisest of them cannot say that, either while they are in full health and strength, or when they are about to die. What becomes even of their great cardinals when they die? I have seen a notice of this sort put up in their churches, and

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probably many of you have also seen it, "Of your charity, pray for the repose of the soul of Cardinal So-and-so;" so that it is evident that he has gone somewhere or other where he is not at rest. It is quite clear that he has not gone to heaven; so all that he has done, all the masses that he has said, all the confessions he has made, and all the penances he has undergone, have done nothing for him but land him somewhere where he has not got repose for his soul. But it, is the glory of the gospel of Christ that it says to the sinner, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be justified immediately. Trust in what he has done, and you shall be saved, and you shall know that you are saved, and that you shall be saved for ever." This is a gospel that is worth preaching, and I pray you, therefore, to regard it as worth hearing, while I try to expound it during the few remaining minutes available for my discourse; and, in order that you may do so, I urge you to put away all self-righteousness in which you have hitherto trusted. Bury it; bury it for ever; it will only ruin you if you rely upon it.

**II.** Our second text reveals THE DIVINE JUSTIFICATION OF WHICH THE APOSTLE PAUL SPEAKS: "It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?"

Brethren and sisters in Christ, you know that God *can justify the ungodly*. We may put this truth very broadly, and say that God can take an unjust, unrighteous sinner, and, by a wondrous process, which made even the angels in heaven to be astonished when it was revealed to them, he can take the guilt from the guilty one, and cast it into the depths of the sea; and he can cover the unrighteous man with a spotless robe of righteousness, so that he shall be accounted fair and lovely, and whiter than the newly-fallen snow. God can do this, at once, for every soul that is willing to accept the divine plan of salvation. Well might the apostle say, "It is God that justifieth." Oh, what a blessing it is that God is able to pardon the guilty, and both to impute and impart righteousness to those who have none of their own!

Notice how this great work is done. *The whole wondrous plan of salvation can be summed up in a single word, — substitution.* As the first Adam stood before God as the representative and federal head of the whole human race, and as it was by his sin that our whole race fell, it became possible for God to regard our race as a whole, and to find for us another Adam, who would come and stand in our stead, and represent us as the

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first Adam did; so that, as in the first Adam we fell, we might be raised up by a second Adam. That second Adam is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Mary, the Lord from heaven. He has been here upon this earth, and he has kept the law of God in every jot and tittle, and has woven a righteousness which covers the sinner from head to foot when he is enabled to put it on; and then, when the law of God examines him, it cannot find a flaw, or a rent, or even a faulty thread, in that matchless robe which is woven from the top throughout.

In addition to this, inasmuch as we had actually sinned against the Lord, this glorious God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ, suffered the terrible consequences of our sin. Oh, wondrous truth! He went up to the accursed tree, and freely gave himself up to die a felon's death, that, in that death, the justice of God might be vindicated, and that God might be just, and yet the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus to be just because Jesus that was due for his sin. It is thus that God can reckon the sinner has taken his place, and borne the penalty.

"But," asks someone, "how is that great work accomplished? I see that Christ suffered instead of sinners, and wrought out a righteousness which sinners could never have wrought for themselves; but how can that righteousness become theirs?" God's plan, my friend, is that thou shouldst hide thyself in Christ. Thou must come to Christ, and take what he has done to be thine by an act of simple faith. I cannot use a better illustration than that of the sin-offering brought to the priest under the Mosaic dispensation. When the sacrificial animal was about to be slain, the sinner came and laid his hands upon the head of the beast, and confessed his sin over the appointed sin-offering. Thus, his sin was put on the animal, which was then killed and consumed; and so, in type, the man's sin was put away. In a similar fashion, come, beloved, to my Lord Jesus Christ at this very moment; and, by an act of faith, put your sin where God long ago laid it; and, in token of that act say to your Lord and Savior himself, —

*'My faith doth lay her hand  
On that dear head of thine,  
While like a penitent I stand,  
And thus confess my sin.'*

If thou dost thus trust Christ, even though thou hast never done so in all thy life before, it does not matter; for, if thou has done so now, then thy sin is laid upon Christ, and he has so completely borne the penalty for it that it

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has ceased to be, and his righteousness is accounted thine seeing that thou art a believer in him. When God looks at thee, he see no sin in thee, nor does he mark any lack of righteousness; in thee; but for the sake of Jesus Christ, his Son, he doth accept and look upon to as though thou hadst always kept his righteous law.

"But for whom is this great work accomplished?" someone asks; "you surely do not mean that it is for me?" I do mean that it is for thee if thou art a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. But if thou wilt not trust to him, on thine own head be the guilt of thy soul's eternal ruin. If thou wilt have Christ's righteousness, it is for thee. "What," sayest thou, "for such a guilty sinner as I am?" Hearken, man; if thou hadst not be guilty, God need not have provided a righteousness for thee. Of course, Christ's righteousness is for the guilty; for whom should it be if not for them? "Dost thou mean," says one, "that, in a moment, I may be cleansed from all sin simply by believing in Jesus?" Yes, I do mean that; thou, even thou, may be cleansed this very instant. "But I have not lived a good life." If thou hadst lived a good life, thou wouldst not have needed a Savior; Christ Jesus came into

the world to have, not the good, but the bad. "In due time Christ died for the ungodly." Publish that blessed truth round the whole earth, and let the ungodly especially hear it. Jesus himself said, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Therefore, ye sin-sick souls, trust yourselves to the Christ who came on purpose to heal just such souls as you are. Only trust him, and there is immediate pardon and immediate salvation for you. "This is too good to be true," saith one. Not so, for high as the heavens are above the earth, so are God's thoughts above your thoughts, and his ways above your ways. You feel that you could not forgive like this any who had wronged you; but God's ways are not to be measured by yours. You have often heard us praise and extol him by singing, —

***'Who is a pardoning God like thee?***

***Or who has grace so rich and free?'***

My first text said, "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me;" but my second text as good as says, *"If God justifies me, nobody can condemn me."* Paul, who wrote these words, and who had been a blasphemer, and a prosecutor, and injurious, boldly declares, "It is God that justifieth," and then utters the confident challenge, "Who is he that condemneth?" Are you not astonished to hear that little man from Tarsus

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talk in such a fashion as that? Why, there is the blood of the martyr Stephen crying out of the ground, and saying, "Why, Paul, I condemn thee." Then there is the blood of all the poor men and women whom he dragged off to prison, or compelled to blaspheme the name of Christ. And those whom he put to death in every city, does not the blood of the martyrs cry out against Paul the apostle, who was once Saul the persecutor? How does he dare to cry, "Who is he that condemneth?" Yet there is no voice of blood raised against him; all is still and silent, for God has blotted out for ever even that great sin which he had committed. But do not the fiends of hell bring accusations against him? Does not the arch-fiend lift up his head, and say, "Saul of Tarsus, you are a liar, for I can condemn you. You know what a self-righteous man you used to be, and how you sinned against God in that way?" No, even Satan himself dare not accuse the apostle, for "it is God that justifieth." He has so effectually silenced the powers of darkness with the blood and righteousness of Christ, that, like, dogs which dread their master's whip, they lie down in their kennel, not daring even to howl against a blood-washed child of God. But do you not expect the angels in heaven, who saw Stephen die, and watched Saul of Tarsus in all his cruel persecutions, to bend down from their shining thrones, and say, "O Paul, it ill becomes you to ask, Who is he that condemneth? when all of us can condemn you?" Oh, no! they all see the splendor of the righteousness of Christ, and they are all glad to take their harps, and sing a new song to the praise and glory of Jesus. Paul's triumphant declaration, "It is God that justifieth," seems to start them again singing, as John heard them in his island prison, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." You

may thus challenge hell, earth, and heaven, if you believe in Jesus; for if God has justified you, who is he that can condemn you?

“But,” says someone, “we must feel something.” Just so; but if you ever do feel aright, Christ must make you feel aright. You must not bring your feelings to Christ, any more than your works; salvation by feelings is no more possible than salvation by good works. Salvation is all of grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

“Well,” says one “I am spiritually brought to a bankrupt condition; for, if I turned my pockets inside out, metaphorically, I could not find a solitary farthing in them.” Well, then, you are the very man to receive the free grace of Christ. When you have no merits, no good feelings, nothing whatever to recommend you, — when at hell’s dark door you lie, then it is

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that salvation’s joyful sound is pleasant to your ears and blessed are the ears that hear it, and blessed is the heart that accepts it. Ask Christ for it, and thou shalt have it; the Holy Spirit himself will help thee to ask for it aright. Ask him to teach thee how to ask for it. Ask Christ for everything, for all your salvation, from foundation to topstone, is in him, and he will freely bestow it upon you for his own glory.

Now I must close my discourse by reminding you that *this way of finding justification by faith in Jesus Christ has commended itself to the best of men*, and I hope it will commend itself to you. Cowper, in one of his later letters, says: - I will give you his words as nearly as I can remember them,)

“I cannot survey the future with any joy, when I look upon it from the top of my own good works. Though I have labored, ever since my conversion, to have a conscience void of offense toward God and men, yet my only hope in death is in the blood and righteousness of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in whom death once sheathed his sting.” And when Dr. Watts, that sweet singer of Israel, was dying, he said to one who stood by his bedside, “I heard an old divine once say that, when the most learned Christian minister comes to die, he draws his greatest comfort from the plainest promises of God’s Word; and so,” said Dr. Watt, “do I; and I bless God that they are so simple that they do not need any great understanding in order to grasp them. My hope is simply in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior.” And so the good man fell asleep. If we had time and opportunity, we might multiply such testimonies almost indefinitely, for all the children of God, who have lived the best conceivable lives, uniformly declare that they do not trust for salvation in anything they have done, or felt, or been, or suffered, but that they live by faith upon the Son of God, who loved them, and gave himself for them.

I should like to finish by telling you the way in which one of the old Puritans, Mr. Thomas Doolittle, once finished a sermon, and I pray that God will set his blessing on it. The preacher turned to one of the members of the church, sitting in the left-hand gallery, and, addressing him by name, he said: “Brother So -and-so, do you repent having trusted your soul to Christ?” And the brother answered, “No, sir, I do not repent it, for I never knew what true joy and peace meant until I believed in the Lord Jesus



Christ." Mr. Doolittle then turned to the other side of the gallery, and said, a Brother So-and-so, do you repent having trusted your soul with Christ?" And he answered, "No, sir, I do not. I have known the Lord since I was a child, and my soul's rest and confidence have been found in him; and the  
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more I know him, the more I rejoice in him." Then, looking straight before him, to a young man who had been somewhat uneasy during the sermon, the preacher said, "Young man, I do not know your name, but will you have the blood and righteousness of Christ to save you?" The young man was so abashed by this public appeal that he hid his face, and said nothing. The person sitting next to him nudged him, and the minister, looking straight at him, said to him, "Young man, will you answer this question? There is salvation for you in Jesus Christ if you believe in him; are you ready to believe in him?" These young man looked up, and said, "Yes, sir." "When?" asked the preacher. The young man replied, "Now, sir." "Then," said he, "listen thou to the voice of God. 'Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.'" That young man and his father became two earnest Christian men renowned in the church in years afterwards. It might not be wise for me exactly to imitate that good man's action, and if I specially addressed a young man, the old men might think that I did not mean them to trust in Christ, and the young women might imagine that I had passed them over. So, instead of speaking to one person only, I will put the question to everybody here. I have told you about God's way of making you just in his sight; now, are you willing to be made just in God's way? If you die unjust, you will be lost for ever. If you live unjust, you will miss all true peace and rest of heart. Are you willing to have God's righteousness? You say, "Yes." Well, faith is the accepting of what God gives. Faith is the believing what God says. Faith is the trusting to what Jesus has done. Only do ye this, and you are saved, as surely as you are alive. You may have come into this place unsaved, and have been sitting here a lost soul, yet you may go home saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, and you may know it, too. So I say to each individual here, — *If thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ, thou art saved, saved now, and saved for ever. Therefore, be of good courage, thou who hast trusted in the Lord, and go thy way rejoicing in him, and may God bless thee both now and for ever! Amen.*

## EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

### *ROMANS 10.*

In commenting once more upon this familiar chapter, I cannot help repeating a remark which I have made to you before — that it is very  
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significant that this tenth chapter should immediately follow the subject dealt with in the ninth chapter. In the ninth chapter, we have the doctrine of absolute predestination proclaimed in the sternest and boldest manner, —

the doctrine that God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he will have compassion. Now, it is commonly thought, by those who do not rightly understand Calvinism, that that doctrine has a tendency to burden the heart and dry up the springs of compassion. That it was not so in Paul's case, is very clear, for this chapter is a most affectionate one, and in it the apostle manifests a most loving spirit towards his fellow-countrymen, the Jews, and the chapter also contains the widest conceivable declaration of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the fact being that the grand doctrine of divine predestination is by no means inconsistent with the fullest and freest preaching of the gospel of Christ.

**Verse 1.** *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.*

Paul is writing concerning: the Jews — the very people who had driven him from city to city, and who had again and again sought to take his life. Yet he could not forget that these men were his own countrymen; and, consequently, with a consecrated patriotism, he desired beyond everything else that they might be saved.

**2.** *For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.*

The Jews of Paul's day were zealous, but they were zealous in ignorance. And that is just what we may say, at the present time, concerning a large number of our fellow-countrymen, — those who are ordinarily called Ritualists. "They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." None can be more zealous than they are, but a grave error is at the root of their whole system, a fatal ignorance concerning the truth of the gospel.

**3.** *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*

Man must have a righteousness of one kind or another; and if he has not a God-given righteousness, he seeks to have one of his own making. As the spider spinneth her web out of her own bowels, so do sinful men try to manufacture a righteousness out of that which is within them; but this they  
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can never do. The only righteousness which will stand the test of the day of judgment is that which God bestows upon believers in his Son Jesus Christ. Oh, that all men were willing to submit themselves to the righteousness of God!

**4.** *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*

"The end of the law" is to make a man righteous, and Christ does make righteous everyone who believes in him. The act of faith in Christ accomplishes what all the good works in the world never can accomplish.

**5.** *For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth these things shall live by them.*

That is the message of the law: "Do, and live." But the message of the gospel is, "Live, and do;" — a very different thing. The law says, "Work to

obtain life.” The gospel says, “You have life freely given to you in Christ Jesus; now work for him because you live by him.”

**6-9.** *But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up CHRIST again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

How simple is the divine plan of salvation, — confess Jesus Christ believing in him; — or, in the other order, believe in Jesus Christ, and then acknowledge your faith for so it is written, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” — baptism being the way of confessing the faith which you already possess.

**10-13.** *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

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What precious promises these are, and how wide they are! “Whosoever — whosoever.” That must include you, dear friend, if you believe in Jesus, and call upon the name of the Lord.

**14, 15.** *How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*

Here you have the whole plan of salvation. Christ is preached, sinners bear the message of the gospel, they believe it, and so they are saved. What a mass of rubbish men have interjected into this blessed simple plan! What counterfeits of so-called sacraments, and what a mass of human doings and external paraphernalia of all sorts they have interjected! God requires none of their fripperies, and fineries, and ornate performances, but simply say, “Believe, and live.” How different is this from the cumbrous, complicated plan by which men would destroy our souls! Cling to the old-fashioned gospel, beloved, and never turn away from it. There is nothing that can take the place of the simplicity of divine truth. God grant that throughout England, and from one end of the world to the other, salvation by believing, the result of hearing the gospel, may be proclaimed.

**16.** *But they have not all obeyed the gospel.*

That is the pity of it, — that so many have heard the gospel, but have not obeyed it. This shows that the gospel comes to us as a command, because we cannot disobey where there is no order or rule. O sinner, listen to this! When you hear the gospel, it is not left to your own choice to have it or

leave it, so that you are as free to do the one as the other; so if you reject it, you are disobedient to it.

**16-18.** *For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard?*

Ah, that is the important question! If they had not heard it, they could not be condemned for disobeying it, for the sin lies in hearing and yet not believing. ‘Have they not heard?’

**18, 19.** *Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and the words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know?*

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Did not the Jews hear the gospel? Certainly they did, and they rejected it. Moses foretold it would be so: —

**19.** *First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.*

So the poor outcast Gentiles have received Christ although Israel rejected him.

**20, 21.** *But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.*

God grant that we may not be disobedient and gainsaying as Israel was but that we may all accept Christ at once as our only and all-sufficient Savior!

# CLEANSING — WRONG OR RIGHT?

NO. 3069

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**ON LORD'S -DAY EVENING, MAY 31ST, 1874.**

‘If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.’ — Job 9:30, 31.

WE are all, by nature and by practice, unclean, in the sight of God. However excellent or virtuous we may seem before man, we have all broken God's law, for that law requires perfection, and we have been far from it. The law demands spotless holiness towards God, and perfect rectitude towards man; and in, some point or other we have all transgressed that law, and we have therefore become polluted before the thrice-holy Jehovah. The great question which ought to arise in the mind of every one of us is this, ‘How can I be cleansed before God?’

**I.** We are called upon to remember, first, that TO BE CLEAN IN THE SIGHT OF GOD IS WORTH EVERY POSSIBLE EFFORT.

Job speaks of washing himself with snow water, and trying to make himself clean; and this he speaks of right earnestly. However far from the hot plains in which he lived Job might have to send for snowy water, — whatever quantity of soap (for, in the Hebrew, there is an allusion to soap in the second clause,) — however much nitre and soap he might have to

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take in order to wash himself perfectly clean, it was worth all the expense and trouble if only it could be accomplished.

And, dear friends, we must be clean in the sight of God; we must want to be clean in the sight of God; for, *if not, we are the objects of his continual displeasure.* “God is angry with the wicked every day.” This is a solemn truth which is far too much forgotten in the present day. Many have tried to put the thought of it right on one side, and held forth only the doctrine of the divine benevolence; but while that doctrine is blessedly true, these solemn declarations are equally true, *‘The wicked shall be turned into* Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon on the same text is *No. 1,908 in Metropolitan Tabor. Hole -Pulpit, ‘Washed to Greater Foulness.’* He’ll, and all the nations that forget God;’ and ‘he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not, believed in the. name of the only begotten Son of God.” Now, if we were, right -hearted towards God, this would seem to us to be a very dreadful tiling. We little know how exceedingly hateful sin is to God.\* You know that, there are some things, which you and I sometimes see, which are very disgusting and loathsome, to us. I went once, into a railway station in Italy, where I saw a man who had lost his arm, and who, by way of begging, exposed to us the stump of it., and also, a horrible, ulcer from which he, was suffering. I fumed away sick at, the sight, and dreaded to go to, that, station again, for fear that I should be met, inside the door of the waiting-room, by that horrible spectacle. But, depend upon it, no mutilation and no disease of man’s body was ever so sickening to the, most delicate taste as sin is sickening to God. He loves purity, and therefore he must. loathe impurity. He delights in those, who, are just, and true., and upright, and he cannot endure those who are unjust, false, or unrighteous. His holy soul abhors them, as that strong expression of his in the prophecy of Zechariah proves: ‘My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me.” The sinner does not dislike God more than God dislikes him., as a sinner. The sinless God cannot look with complacency upon him who is. sinful; he is loathsome, to the holy mind of God. So, surely, if we are right-hearted, we shall feel that anything and everything that we can do., in order to get right with God, and to become, clean in his: sight., we ought to do at once.

Let us also remember that, *as long as we are unclean, we are in daily danger of the, fires of hell.* ]Do any of you know what hell is? It is the lazar-house of the universe. Just. as, in the olden times, when the “black

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pest,” or some other terrible epidemic ran through a town or village, they

would build a house some miles away from the place, axial call it The pesthouse, where they would put away all those, who, had Th. pest or plague, — such is hell, only a million times worse than any earthly pest-house ever was. Hell is the pest, house, o.f the moral universe:. You know that, in countries where leprosy prevails, they shut up the lepers in a place by themselves, lest the terrible disease should pollute the whole district,; and hell is God's leper -house, where, sinners; must be, confined for ever when they are incurable, and past hope. And what are the pains of hell? They are the natural result of sin. Sin is the mother of hell. The pains and groans of lost spirits, in hell are simply the fully-developed flowers of which Th.[r sins were the seed. Bitter is the fruit, sour is the vintage of that vine of Sodom and Gomorrah which some men set, themselves so diligently to plant, and so industriously to water. Sin bears its own sting within itself. The torments that are to, come, are the stings of conscience,, and the inevitable effects of remorse, upon the soul and body of the man who, will continue, to be unclean in the sight of God. Lest, therefore, any of you should ever be shut up in that place of "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," I do beseech you to arouse yourselves, and diligently seek to find out how ye may be made clean in God's sight.

***'Ye sinners, seek his grace,  
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;  
Fly to the shelter of his cross,  
And find salvation there.  
'So shall that curse remove,  
By which the Savior bled;  
And the last awful day shall pour  
His blessings on your head.'***

In addition to the eternal loss which all who are cast, into hell must, sustain., be it also remembered that *none can enter heaven until they are pure*. Those holy gates are so closely guarded by angelic watchers that no contraband of sin shall ever cross the frontiers of heaven. The angels look up and down, and through stud through, the man who presents himself there; and if so much as a speck, or *spot*, or *wrinkle*, or any such thing be found upon him, he cannot be allowed to enter. Just think for a minute hear utterly impossible it must be for the impure to enter the courts of the thrice-holy God. You sometimes see, in the streets of London., wretched  
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creatures in whom poverty, and drunkenness, and debauchery have so combined that, even in their outward appear-ante, they present a truly horrible aspect. They are so foul, and filthy, and loathsome that I should not dare to describe them more fully. None of us would like to come very near them; our flesh creeps at the very thought of them. Now, suppose that these' shoeless, ragged, filthy, diseased creatures should present themselves at the gates of Buckingham Palace on some great, occasion when all the princes of the blood and the peers of the realm, were: gathered there; do even the most democratic of you think that, the soldiers would be

too squeamish if they were to tell them that they were unfit to enter such a place, and to mingle with such company? *‘Why, no,’* you say, *‘of course, they must at least be clean, or they can never enter the royal palace.’* Well, then, it must assuredly be so, in a still more emphatic sense, with regard to the palace of the King of kings. Would it be possible for any to, enter there defiled with sin, foul with fornication’s, adulteries, thefts, murders, infidelities, blasphemies, profanities, and rebellions against God? It cannot be that the pure air of heaven should ever be breathed by them, for it is expressly declared that *‘there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.’* All who are there are absolutely perfect; and you and I, if we would be with them, must, be renewed in heart, and converted unto God, and washed from every stain, and spot., and speck of sin. It is clearly impossible that the thrice-holy God should have, unrenewed, un-cleaned sinners immediately under his own eyes, in his own, courts. It is bad enough for him to have them, for a time, in this little planet, floating in the vast. sea of space; but he could not endure to have them up there amid the splendors of eternal glory. That cannot, must not, and will not, be.

Once more, *every man will feel that it is worth his while to endeavor to be clean before God if he wants a quiet conscience,* for a truly quiet conscience is never possessed by any man until he has been washed in the precious blood of Jesus, and so made *‘whiter than snow.’* Does anyone ask, *‘Can that be done?’* I answer in God’s own words: *‘Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’* This great miracle of mercy can be wrought, and nobody’s conscience will ever be perfectly at peace till it is accomplished. There is a way of silencing conscience without that miracle being wrought, but it is like the way in which camel tyrants sometimes silenced the martyrs. *‘Hold*

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your tongue,’ the tyrant has said, *‘I will not listen to your heresy,’* but the bravo man has still gone on speaking, he would not be silenced; and then the tyrant has cut his tongue out. I think I have known men cut out. the tongue of their conscience, so that, it. could no longer speak. Perhaps some: here have done it, — torn it right out, by the roots, by going to the drink-shop, by frequenting evil company, by taking up infidel ideas, when they knew better. They knew that they could not, with a clear conscience, do what they wanted to do, so they resolved that they would tear out its tongue, so that it could no. longer rebuke, them.

O foolish man, you could not have done a worse thing for yourself than that, for he who quiets his conscience after that fashion is like one of whom I have heard who, one night, was unable to sleep because a faithful dog kept, on howling under his window. He called out to it, and bade it lie, down, and went back to bed, and tried to sleep, but still the howling continued; and, at last., when the creature would not be quiet., he took his gun. and shot it in his anger. He, ought to have known that the dog wanted to tell him that, there were burglars who were trying to enter his house,



and that the faithful animal was doing its best to preserve its master's life. Affix the dog was dead, and the man had gone to sleep again, the burglars entered his bedroom., stole, everything of value that. they could find, and ended by imbruing their hands in the blood of the foolish man who had killed the poor creature that warned him of his peril. The, devil is trying to destroy your soul; and )'our conscience, like that, faithful else, gives, the alarm, but you cry to. it, 'Lie down!' It, does not lie down, however; and perhaps this very sermon is helping to, walde, it, up; but you are determined that it shall be quiet., and you will even kill it if you can. Well, if you do. you will then have sealed your own destiny by that very deed. The only proper way of quieting conscience is the method that a wise owner would have taken of quieting his dog. Supposing that man had gone downstairs, and patted his dog on the head. and praised it for being a good dog; suppose that he had loosed its. chain, and taken it round the, yard with him.

Suppose, too, that he had taken that gun, with which he so foolishly killed his dog, and when, at. last., he had discovered the villains who had come to rob him, he had set his dog at them, or even leveled his gun at them, that, would have been far wiser than' killing his dog, and losing his own life. In such a fashion as that, go and loose your conscience, and let your sins be destroyed; otherwise, they will assuredly destroy you. The quieting of an  
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awakened conscience can only be rightly done by getting rid of sin; and to get rid of sin there is but one way, of which I will speak before, I have finished my discourse.,

Thus much can the first point, — to be clean in the, sight of God is worth any and every effort.,

## **II.** Now, secondly, ALL EFFORTS OF OUR OWN, MADE IN OUR OWN WAY, WILL CERTAINLY FAIL.

It is very curious what efforts people will make, to get rid of their sins. *Some try to get clean, by ceremonies.* Ah, Mr. Priest, is that good soap that you axe, bringing with your bowl of water? "Yes," he replies, "the best Roman soap, or you can have a cake from Canterbury or Oxford if you would prefer it. How beautifully white your hands will look if you only use enough of this patent scap." So you say; but if you had your eyes opened, you would see that, after all your washing, they are as black as night. The soap-suds get in your eyes, sir, and therefore you do, not, see the dirt that is still on the sinner's hands. That is all that ever comes of mere ceremonies; they blind, but they do not cleanse.

*Another thinks that he can obtain cleansing by religious observances.* His form of washing with snow water is attendance at his usual place of worship. He gees there regularly,, he will never be away, if he can help it, when the proper time for service comes; and having done that,, he asks, "Will not that take away my sin?" No, sir, not a spot, nor even half a spot. Some have given away large sums of money with the hope of thereby cleansing themselves from sin; but all the gold in the world can never form

a golden ointment, with which to cleanse iniquity. There are many who have tried to get cleansing by their moralities and their charities, but their efforts have all been in vain. Mr. Legality and Mr. Civility are said to be great hands at washing blackamoors white, but, I have very grave doubts as to whether the blackamoors are not blacker after the washing than they were before.

Men have had the strangest notions as to how they might be cleansed from sin. Read John Bunyan's "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners," — which is, as you know, a record of his own experience, and you will see some very curious ideas of his concerning the way in which he hoped to wash himself from sin; yet, his ideas are not any more curious than those of people who are living now. The other day, I read a letter from a young

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farm laborer, describing the way in which, at one time, he hoped to get saved. He said that, in the village where he lived, there were some young men who went to the Patagonian Mission, and there got what he called "massacred." Of course, he, meant, to say that they were massacred; and he further wrote, "I thought; that, if the Patagonian Mission would have taken me, and, the natives would only have killed me, joyfully and gladly would I have gone, for I heard that they wore all saints who died in, that way, and I would willingly have gone if I could have got to heaven by that method." Ay, and so, would I, and so would most of us when we were under the burden of sin. We would not have minded being killed and eaten if we might, in, that way, have entered into eternal *life*, for a man who really feels the burden of sin is willing to try all sorts of extraordinary methods, of getting rid of it. Look at the methods adopted by the heathen in, order, as they hope to get rid of sin. Go to India, and look at the great car of Juggernaut, and see by what cruel means the, people there hope, to get rid of sin,; and there are many other equally useless methods which the spiritual quacks are vainly puffing as unfailing ways of getting rid of sin. But, on, the authority of the Word of God, we confidently declare that all human methods of seeking *the* cleansing of sin, which men may practice, must end in failure, even as Job's did when he said, "If I wash, myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt, thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." Yet, if God really means to save you, he will never let you be satisfied with any human plan of salvation; but he will, to use Job's expression, plunge you in the ditch, and make you feel even blacker than you did before, . How will he do, that? Sometimes the Lord does this *by bringing to a man's memory his old sins*. "There," says the self-satisfied man, "I am getting on now; how clean I am after that last wash!" And just then he recollects some sin he committed as a boy, or some one foul deed which he can never wipe completely off the tablet, of his memory. "Oh!" he cries, "that dreadful past sin, of mine has not gone, as I vainly hoped that it had; it is there still." So is he again plunged in the ditch, and all his beautiful washing counts for nothing. At another time, *the Lord permits the man, to be greatly tempted*. He gets up in the morning, and says to himself, "Now I really feel a great deal

better than I have felt for a long time. I have firmly resolved to make a man of myself, and I know that my resolutions are much stronger than they used to be." So he starts out very confidently; but., presently, there comes to

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him something that is stronger than his resolutions, and over goes the boastful man, generally fatling in the very thing in which he fancied himself to, be strongest. He, soon discovers that he was only powerful as long as he had not a powerful adversary to contend with. him. That is the way in which many a man has been plunged by God in the ditch.

Sometimes, God will do, it in another way, — *by opening a boastful man's eyes to see the imperfection of his work.* He thinks, "I did that piece of work well; I am sure I did; and I do not see how any Christian could do it better." When any man begins to talk like, that, the Lord often makes him sit, down, and closely examine that work of which he is so proud; and as he looks at, it, he sees that it is full of flaws. It is a beautiful vase, but just try to fill it with water. Ah, it leaks! The man looks at it, and says, "Well, I never thought it was as faulty as this. It seemed to me to be perfect; yet this beautiful vase, that appeared to be so fair, runs like a sieve." The man says to himself, "That good action of mine was done with a bad me five, so it. is like a leaky vessel. While I was doing it., I was as proud as Lucifer over it., so it leaks; and after I had done it, I went away, and boasted about it., so the vase kept on leaking." In, that way, the, man gets plunged into the ditch again, and he sees himself to be blacker than he was before he had thus washed his hands with snow water.

Very frequently, men have been plunged into the ditch *by being made to see the spirituality of the law.* A main says, "I have not broken the law; I have kept all the commandments from my youth up. I never killed anybody; no ease call say that I ever did." But where he finds it written, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer," he also, "Ah, then, I have been a murderer!" A man says, very boldly, "I have never committed adultery; who dares to say that I have?" But when he reads the words of Jesus, "I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart," then the man says, "I must, own that I am guilty, for I see that I have broken these commandments, by my thoughts and looks, although I knew that I had not broken them by my actions. I did not know that the law concerned itself so, closely with looks and thoughts as well as with acts and words." But, indeed, that is the very thing with which the law is concerned, and for which it condemns men; and when the, self-satisfied man learns this solemn truth, he says, "Then I am plunged in the ditch, and my own clothes abhor me, although I had washed myself quite clean."

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Others are plunged in the ditch in this way, — *they are made to realize the supreme holiness of God.* It had been the habit of a certain man to say, "I am, as good as my neighbors, and better than most of them. Don't talk to me about Christian men and women; there's many a pr ofessing Christian not half as good as I a.m. Why, was I not kind to my neighbor when he

was in distress? Did I not give a guinea to such-and-such a charity? Am I not ready at all times to, stand up for the, right,?" So he talks; but when he gets a view of God, then, like Job, he abhors himself, and repents in dust and ashes; and he says, 'I thought, I could compare; myself with. man. but I cannot compare myself" with God; and as God, and not. man, is the standard of holiness, I am indeed plunged in the, ditch. Yet. I thought I had washed myself perfectly clean; that snow water and patent soap did seem to, take the dirt off beautifully; but, now I find that, in the sight of God, I am just as filthy as ever I can be." And when the Lord, the Holy Spirit,, convinces a man of sin, the words of Job are none too strong: '*Mine* own clothes shall abhor me." You may sometimes have abhorred your clothes because they were so dirty that. you were ashamed to be seen in them.: but, you must be dirty indeed when your very clothes seem ashamed to hang upon you. This is what the convinced sinner feels, — that he is so foul that his very clothes seem to be ashamed of him, as if they would rather have been on anybody else's back than on, the back of such a filthy sinner as he is.

"Ah!" says someone, "you are exaggerating now." No, I am not exaggerating, at least as far as my own personal experience is concerned. I can well remember — — though I did not, then know that John Bunyan had used somewhat similar expressions — I can well remember, when I was under deep conviction of sin, wishing that I had been a frog or a toad rather than have been a human being, because I felt, myself to be so, foul in the sight of God. I felt that I was such a great sinner that the bread I ate might justly choke me, and that the air I breathed might have righteously refused to give life to the lungs of such a sinner as I was. I felt, at that time, that, if" God spared me, it was only because he was boundless in compassion; and if he cast me into the hottest hell, I could never murmur against the justice of his sentence, for I felt that I deserved any punishment that he might award me. When the Holy Spirit brings sinners to feel like. this, it, is a proof that he is leading them on the way by which he brings them, to Christ. Oh, that the Lord would make every guilty sinner here long to, be clean in his sight, and also make each one feel what is certainly

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the truth, — that all the means, in a man's own power, of making himself clean will turn out to be dead failures; for, though he should take snow water, and wash himself never so clean, yet would he again be plunged in the ditch, and his own clothes would abhor him.

**III.** The 'last point on which I have to speak is the best. It is this, —

THERE IS A RIGHT WAY OF GETTING CLEAN IN GOD' S SIGHT.

First, *it is an effective way.* He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ, shall, be made clean. He shall be cleansed from all the foulness of the past; God will wipe it right out,. He shall be cleansed as to his heart and his nature. To him God repeats that ancient promise, "A. new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit, will I put within you." '*How* is this to be had?" By trusting to the divine method of cleansing the filthy, for the blood of

Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin everyone who, believes in him. There are millions upon the earth now whom the blood of Jesus Christ has completely cleansed, and there, are millions more, now hymning his praises in glory, who have had every spot of sin taken out of them by the application of his precious blood. O sinful souls, if you could ever have made, yourselves clean, Christ would not have needed to pour out his life's blood that you might be washed in it! If the cleansing bath could have been filled with human tears, or could have, been filled by means of the incantations of a so-called priest, there would have, been no need for thy wounds, O Emmanuel, and no, need of thine indwelling. O regenerating and sanctifying Spirit! But because we could not be cleansed by any other means, the water and the blood flowed freely from the pierced heart of Jesus, the, Divine Son of God; and now the ever-blessed Spirit waits to be gracious, and to change the heart, and renew the nature, and make us fit, to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

This effective way of getting cleansed is also *an immediate way*. We have often sung, —

***“There is life for a look at the Crucified One,***

There is life at this moment for thee; “and it is true, for there is instant cleansing for anyone who looks at Jesus Christ. A sinner may have committed more sins than he could count in a million years; and yet, as soon as he gives one believing look at Jesus Christ, all those sins are gone for ever. You know that, when a bill is paid, the receipt is written at the bottom, and that puts an end to the whole debt. So, sinner, the name of

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Jesus at the bottom of the whole roll of your indebtedness to God puts an end to it. all. The man who thinks he has only a few sins may bring his little bill, and you who know that you have many sins may bring your big bill, but Christ's receipt avails for one as much as the other. Even if the roll of your guilt should be many miles long, it makes no difference to the efficacy of the blood of Jesus. If Th. list of your sins should be long enough to, go right round the world, and just one drop of the blood of Jesus should be put upon it,, all that is written there would at once disappear, and be gone for ever, and the sinner would be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.

Further, this effective and immediate way of cleansing is also an *attainable way of cleansing*. To preach to sinners a salvation which they cannot obtain, would be to tantalize them. We do not so, but to every person in this Tabernacle to-night, and to everyone anywhere else whom this message may reach, we have to say this, “If thou wilt confess thy sin to God, and then put thy trust in Jesus Christ, his Son, thou shalt be saved, — -eaten thou, whosoever thou art, and whatsoever sin thou mayest have committed.” Thy confession is to be made, not to thy fellow-creature, but, to him against whom thy sin was committed. Go to thy home, or seek some quiet spot where thou canst commune with thy God; tell him that thou hast, sinned, and ask him to have mercy upon thee. Tell him that Jesus died in the place of sinners, plead the merit of his precious blood, and say,

‘Lord, I believe, that thou canst save me, and I trust in thee to save me, for Jesus’ sake.’ If you will do this, you shall be forgiven, you shall be renewed in heart, you shall be made clean.

In closing my discourse, I remind you, as I have often done before, that *this cleansing is available now*, at this very moment, I recollect hearing of a somewhat niggardly man, who once wanted to hire a horse and chaise to go out for a drive, so he went to the man who let such things, and asked the price. He said that the sum asked was too high, and went round to every other person in the little town, who had such things to let, but found that their prices were higher still. So, at last, he went back to the first man, and said to him, ‘I will take your horse and chaise at the price you mentioned.’ ‘No,’ said he, ‘you won’t, for you have been round to everybody else to try to get them at a lower price, and I shall not let you have mine now.’ I was not very much surprised to hear that he was told that. Now, some of you have been to everybody else *for* salvation except to the Lord Jesus Christ. You have been to Rome, and you have been to

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Oxford, and you have been to self, and I hardly know where you have not been; yet, notwithstanding that, you may come to Christ even now. He will not refuse you even now. Going to Canterbury has not saved you, but going to Calvary can. You have found no help in the city on the seven hills, but you may find immediate help on the little hill outside Jerusalem’s gate, the little mound called Calvary, whereon the Savior shed his precious blood for all who will put their trust in him.

I have been talking to you in a very simple, homely way, for I have been afraid lest anybody should by any possibility not know what the gospel really is. I always think that, if my net has small meshes, the big fish can get in, and the little fish cannot get out; so I have put small meshes to my net, and talked in a homely style with simple illustrations which all can understand. The Lord knows that I have done this out of love to your souls. I would bring you all to Jesus if I could; but I cannot do that. Oh, that the Spirit of God would do it now! Why do you need so much urging to come to Christ? You are filthy with sin, and here is a free bath in which you may be washed spotlessly white. Come and bathe in Jesus’ blood, and that will make you fairer than the lilies, and lovelier than all the glories of Solomon. If you do but wash in this fountain, you will scarcely know yourself when you come up out of it; and if you happen to meet your old self, the next day, you will say, ‘Ah, self! I don’t want to be on speaking terms with you now. I never knew that you were so ugly, I never knew that you were so filthy, I never knew that you were so abominable, but I had got rid of you by being made a new creature in Christ Jesus.’

The Lord bless you, and bring you to trust in Jesus Christ, his Son, and he shall have all the praise and glory for ever and for ever. Amen.

## EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

*MATTHEW 5:13-26.*

**Verse 13.** *Ye are the salt of the earth:*

The earth would go putrid if there were no salt of grace to preserve it. So, dear friends, if God's grace is in you, there is a pungent savor about you which tends to preserve others from going as far into sin as otherwise they would have done; "Ye are the salt of the earth:"

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**13.** *But if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted?*

If the God-given grace could be taken from you altogether, if you had no sanctifying power about you at all, what could be clone with you? You would be like salt that has lost its savor.

**13.** *It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be east out, and to be trodden under foot of men.*

Mark/his, then, either the saints must persevere to the end, or else the grace of God has done nothing for them effectually. If they do not continue to be saints, and to exercise a saintly influence, there is no hope for them. There cannot be two new births for the same person; if the divine work has failed once, it will never be begun again. If they really have been saved, if they have been made the children of God, and if it be possible *for* them to lose the grace which they have received, they can never have it again. The Word of God is very emphatic upon that point: "If they shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance" Falling may be retrieved, but falling away never can be happy.

There are countries where there is found salt from which the pungency has completely gone. It is an altogether useless article; and if there are men, who ever did possess the grace of *God*, and who were truly God's people, if the divine life could go out of them, they would be in an utterly hopeless case. Perhaps there are no powers of evil in the world greater than apostate churches; who can calculate the influence for evil that the Church of Rome exercises in the world to-day?

**14.** *Ye are the light of the world.*

The Bible is not the light of the world, it is the light of the Church; but the world does not read the Bible, the world reads Christians; "Ye are the light of the world."

**14.** *A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.*

You Christians are like a city built upon a hilltop, you must be seen. As you will be seen, mind that you are worth seeing.

**15.** *Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick/ and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.*

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God's intent is, first, to light you; and, secondly, to put you in a conspicuous position, where men can see you.

**16.** *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

Let the light of your purity and your good works be as bright as possible, yet let not the light be to your own praise and glory; but let it be clearly seen that your good works are the result of sovereign grace, for which all the glory must be given to "your Father which is in heaven."

**17, 18.** *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am*

*not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*

See how the great Lord of the New Testament confirms the Old Testament. He has not come to set up a destructive criticism that will tear in pieces the Book of Deuteronomy, or cut out the very heart of the Psalms, or grind Ezekiel to powder between his own wheels; but Christ has come to establish yet more firmly than before all that was written aforetime, and to make it stand fast as the everlasting hills.

**19.** *Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

A true man may make mistakes, and so he may teach men to violate some one or other of the divine commandments. If he does so, he shall not perish, for he was honest in his blunder; but he shall be among the least in the kingdom of heaven. But he, who earnestly, perseveringly, and conscientiously teaches all that he knows of the divine will, “the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven”

**20.** *For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

Christ does not teach a lower kind of morality than the Pharisees taught. They were very particular about little things, jots and tittles; but we must go further than they went; we must have more righteousness of life than

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they had, although they seemed to their fellow-men to be excessively precise. Christ aims at perfect purity in his people, and we must aim at it too, and we must really attain to more holiness than the best outward morals can produce.

**21.** *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:*

God had said, “Thou shalt not kill;” but the remainder of the verse was the gloss of the Rabbis, a true one, yet one that very much diminishes the force of the divine command.

**22.** *But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment;*

And a far higher judgment than that of men;

**22.** *And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, —*

A word of very uncertain meaning, a kind of snubbing word, a word of contempt which men used to one another, meaning that there was nothing in them: “Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca,” —

**22.** *Shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou feel, shall be in danger of hellfire.*

Christ will not have us treat men with anger, or with contempt, which is a very evil form of hate, akin to murder, because we as good as say, “That man is nobody;” that is, we make nothing of him, which is morally to kill



him. We must not treat our fellow-men with contempt and derision, nor indulge any angry temper against them, for anger is of the devil, but ‘love is of God.’”

**23, 24.** *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

Note that this injunction is addressed to the man who has offended against his brother; why is this? Because he is the least likely to try to make up the quarrel. It is the man who has been offended who usually exhibits the nobler spirit; but the offender is almost always the last to seek a reconciliation, and therefore the Savior says to him, ‘If thy brother hath

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ought against thee, it is but right that thou shouldst be the first to seek reconciliation with him. Leave thy gift, go away from the prayer-meeting, turn back from the Lord’s table, and go and first be reconciled to thy brother.”

**25.** *Agree with thine adversary quickly,*

Always be ready to make peace, — not peace at any price; *but*, still, peace at any price except the sacrifice of righteousness.

**25, 26.** *Whiles thou art in the way with him/lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.*

And there are some debts of which we cannot pay the uttermost farthing; and there is a prison out of which no man shall come, for the uttermost farthing demanded there shall never be paid. God grant that we may none of us ever know what it is to be shut up in that dreadful dungeon!

## WASHED TO GREATER FOULNESS.

NO. 1908

A SERMON DELIVERED

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

‘If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.’ — Job 9:30, 31.

I FEEL certain that I am sent on a special errand at this time. Before my mind’s eye I see a soul whose awful reflections are hurrying him to despair. He refuses counsel, and will not listen to direction, for dread has made him desperate. I would have a word in the ear of that worried and wearied one. See ye not the man? He has battled long against a dark temptation, but at last he is beaten. He feels that he can hold out no longer. He can scarcely take breath; the air grows hot and stifling around him, as he faces the question — what next? Accustomed as I am to look down on these crowded aisles and up at these closely-packed galleries, I feel a strange curiosity as I gaze into the mass; for I know that there is one man among all of you to whom I have a private message. I carry despatches from the King of kings to one who is grievously troubled, and is become as a woman forsaken and despised. My Lord and Master described himself in parable as leaving the ninety-and-nine to seek for one lost sheep: I must now copy his example. You will not grudge me for this service, I am sure. I quit the throng that I may find the bewildered one, and bring him safe and sound to the fold.

Turning to my text, let me say, that as one is startled by a shriek, or saddened by a groan, so these sharp utterances of Job astonish us at first, and then awake our pity. How much are we troubled with brotherly

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compassion as we read the words, — ‘If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me!’ The sense of misery couched in this passage baffles description. Yet this is but one of a series, in which sentence after sentence reveals a fresh chamber of horrors. The similitudes of grief are here piled up in heaps, with what an old author has spoken of as the ‘thetoric of sorrow.’ Physical sufferings had produced a strain on Job’s mind, and he sought relief by expressing his anguish. Like some solitary prisoner in the gloomy keep of an old castle, he graves on the walls pictures of the abject despondencies which haunt him. His afflictions are aggravated by vain efforts to alleviate them: he wounds his hand with the rough hammer and nail with which he is engraving his griefs. Of such tortures many of us have had a taste.

From my experience, as a patient myself, smitten down with soul-sickness; and from my observation as a pastor, into whose ears the woes of awakened sinners are constantly poured, I have somewhat learned to understand the imagery of Job. The sufferer is in double straits. While he is tossed about by Satan, his friends are discharging their arrows at him, and the Almighty troubleth him. To help such a sufferer we must be careful to distinguish between the causes of his sorrow, and divide between his affliction itself and the further sorrows which he has brought upon himself

by his unwise efforts to escape from it.

Such, then, is the line of thought we will pursue. I shall make four divisions; three of them are to be found in the text, and the fourth will follow on, as an important consequence. First, we shall notice that a quickened soul becomes conscious of guilt; secondly, the soul that is quickened makes ineffectual attempts to rid itself of the stain of guilt; thirdly, to deter his people from self-righteousness it pleases God to plunge deeper into the mire those who attempt to cleanse themselves; the fourth point is, that only by severe training are men led to look alone to God for salvation, — it needs omnipotence to teach us that salvation is of the Lord.

**I.** At the outset, then, we observe that QUICKENED SOULS ARE CONSCIOUS OF GUILT. They see it; they know it; they feel it; and they blush to find that they are without excuse for it. All men are sinners: to most men, however, sin appears to be a fashion or the times, a necessity of nature, a folly of youth, or an infirmity of age, which a slight apology will suffice to remove. You will scarcely meet with an Englishman who will not acknowledge that

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he is a sinner. Is it not the General Confession stereotyped in the book of Common Prayer? But it is one thing to call yourself a sinner, and quite another thing to feel it. I have heard of a lady who owned to her minister that she was a great sinner. He questioned her kindly as to which of the ten commands she had broken. Beginning with the first, he asked her, "Did you ever break this?" to which enquiry she indignantly answered, "No." In like manner he dealt with the second, and right through the whole ten. She professed in detail to have observed each one, and yet pretended to confess that she had broken them all. By such equivocations multitudes of men and women deceive themselves; and it is unhappily the custom of many a preacher to address his congregation as if they were all good people, and every one of them knew the Lord, from the least even to the greatest. This is pleasing to the flesh, and clattering to pride; but it is most pernicious. How many are being deceived by this want of marking a difference where a vital difference exists!

Not till men are quickened by divine grace do they truly know that they are sinners. How is this? Some diseases are so insidious that the sufferers fancy that they are getting better, while in very truth they are hastening to the grave. After such manner does sin deceive the sons of men: they think they are saved when they are still unrenewed. How often have I seen a poor girl, whose pale face, sunken eyes, shadowy hand, and languid step have clearly betokened that she was on the brink of death, yet she mistook the flush of consumption for the ruddiness of health. Slowly she waned; but within a day of her departure she planned cheerful projects which proved that she looked for life. Consumption is not, however, so deceitful as sin. Where it has full power over the soul, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" If sin were not so deceitful it would not be half so destructive as it is.

How is this, you ask again? Few give themselves the trouble to think about

these matters at all. Ours is an age in which men's thoughts are keen upon politics and merchandize, practical science and economic inventions, financial schemes and Home Rule, and I know not what beside; but sound doctrine and sincere piety are out of vogue. Few people trouble themselves to think about their souls' everlasting welfare. Men die at the same rate as of yore, but the mortality is reckoned by a percentage; and as for the life hereafter it is ignored. Friend, have you ever dedicated ten minutes of your time to a consideration of your destiny? Days to your ledger; hours to your amusements; years to your commercial engagements; would it not be wise  
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to reserve some moments for your soul's outlook beyond the grave? You have made your last will and testament for the world that is fading away, but you have laid up no treasure for the world to come. Is this consistent with your usual prudence? I should have good hope for some of you if I could make you sit for one hour alone, and think of nothing but your souls, your God, and the final judgment. Alas! alas! as the horse rusheth to the battle, so men rush to the heated competition of the hour. They cannot be persuaded to consider. Poor mortals! They concern themselves about everything that does not concern them, but they persistently neglect everything that is needful to their eternal well-being.

How is this? we enquire once more. To natural ignorance we may attribute much of the ordinary indifference of men to their own sinfulness. They live in a benighted age. In vain you boast the enlightenment of this nineteenth century: the nineteenth century is not one whit more enlightened as to the depravity of human nature than the first century. Men are as ignorant of the plague of their own hearts to-day as they were when Paul addressed them. I know that almost every man you meet with talks as if he were qualified to set up for a doctor of divinity; but is not this the confidence of ignorance? "Vain man would be wise" — or read it, if you please, "vain man is void of understanding — though man be born like a wild ass's colt." Until God the Holy Ghost takes him in hand no spiritual light enters the man's soul. Preaching is an effective means of instructing the mind, arousing the conscience, and impressing the hearts of the people; and faithful preachers are scattered up and down the country within measurable reach of most of your homes. Why, then, is the doctrine of human sinfulness so little understood, and so seldom accepted as an undeniable fact? Many persons seem startled, and try to think that they misunderstand us when we say plainly that in the very best man in the world there is no virtue or grace that can be pleasing to God, unless he has been made a new creature in Christ Jesus. Let me put the truth before you as plainly as I can by speaking of your body in order to describe your soul. You probably imagine that your physical constitution is sound and healthy. I grant you all you ask on that score; yet you are but flesh and blood, like the rest of our mortal race, and therefore you are exposed to every disease which waylays your fellow creatures. Even so, your deceitful heart is capable of as desperate crimes as the vilest of sinners ever committed. The evil propensity lurks within, it needs only the contagion of society, or the temptation of Satan to bring it

out. Does not this alarm you? It ought to do so.

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Hardly a glimmer of the humbling truth of our natural depravity dawns on the dull apprehension of the worldly-wise, though souls taught from above know it and are appalled by it. In divers ways the discovery comes to those whom the Lord ordains to save. Sometimes a preacher sent of God lets in the dreadful light. Many men, like the false prophet Mokanna, hide their deformity. You may remember the story. Mokanna wore a silver veil upon his forehead: should he ever remove it the brightness of his countenance would blind the astonished world. In truth a foul disease had cankered his brow. God's faithful servants are sent to tear off these veils, and expose men to themselves. This duty demands courage. Men veil black villainy with self-flattery! Like Jezebel, they paint their eyebrows, and tire their heads, till they think themselves beautiful. It is ours, like Jehu, to cry, "Throw her down." What have they to do with peace who are the servants of sin? How dare they pretend to comeliness whose hearts are not right with God?

How comes it to pass, then, that the best of saints on earth are prone to account themselves the chief of sinners? Their sincerity is unquestionable. This discovery is due to the Holy Spirit. He it is who convinces men of sin. By his mysterious but most blessed agency on the hearts of men, a sense of utter ruin is wrought in the chosen, and this prepares them to accept the full redemption provided by the sacrifice of the Redeemer. We cannot explain to you the mystery of the Spirit's operation. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." But this we do know — the Holy Spirit withers all merely human hope and righteousness, and thus makes room for trust in the work of our Lord Jesus. Man by nature is blindly proud, and proudly blind. The moment the Spirit of God comes into a man, the scales fall from his eyes, and he sees himself in quite a different light. To each saved soul it seems a strange miracle. I have heard the story from simple lips full many a time. The new self talks of the old self with a kind of vacant wonderment.

Yesterday our friend was on good terms with himself as a virtuous citizen, an honest trader, a sound churchman; in moral worth all that his neighbors could wish. To-day he is vile in his own sight: his hands are filthy, his heart is foul, his thoughts are loathsome. He perceives that he has been walking in a vain show, and therefore he writes himself down a hypocrite. No name too base by which to surname himself.

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Have I found you out, my friend? Wandering among the motley throng, I am in quest of a soul that seeks the mercy of the Lord. Am I not upon your track?

Mayhap I am at this moment addressing a person who has been the subject of a mysterious gloom for which he sees no reason whatever. I am right happy to have found him, for I trust I have met with a recruit for the army of truth. But why, you may enquire, do I make such a remark? I will tell

you in a moment. There is a vital connection between soul-distress and sound doctrine. Sovereign grace is dear to those who have groaned deeply because they see what grievous sinners they are. Witness Joseph Hart and John Newton, whose hymns you have often sung, or David Brainerd and Jonathan Edwards, whose biographies many of you have read. You seldom hear much of God's everlasting covenant in these modern times, for few men feel that thorough conviction of sin which comes directly from the teaching of the Holy Spirit. In the economy of redemption the effectual operation of the Spirit in enlightening the heart concerning its own sinfulness is sure evidence of the Father's personal love to his chosen people, and of the special atonement that the Son of God made for their transgressions.

*'Never had ye felt the guilt of sin,  
Or sweets of pardoning love,  
Unless your worthless names had been  
Enrolled to life above.'*

You may walk through a dark cellar without discerning by the eye that anything noisome is there concealed. Let the shutters be thrown open! Bid the light of day stream in! You soon perceive frogs upon the cold clammy pavement, filthy cobwebs hanging on the walls in long festoons, foul vermin creeping about everywhere. Startled, alarmed, horrified, who would not wish to flee away, and find a healthier atmosphere? The rays of the sun are, however, but a faint image of that light divine shed by the Holy Spirit, which penetrates the thickest shades of human folly and infatuation, and exposes the treachery of the inmost heart. Then the soul cries out in agony, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" When brought to feel this, we think our doom is sealed, and everlasting destruction is close upon us. But it is not so. This is the way of hope. Through death to life every saved soul must pass. Ask us not to paint the sensations; nor blame us if we usually describe that experience which is most distinct. Sharp conviction, fainting heart, struggling hope, fear that

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haunts, terror that appalls, — an awful fight of fiercely strange emotions! This is the extreme measure of the life-change. In milder form, with one decisive pang the true heart is born again. The Slough of Despond lies across every pilgrim's pathway. The years or hours it takes to wade through it must be left an open question. Sudden death is an occasional fact, but more frequently the saints are peacefully welcomed to the realms above; so in the church on earth, sudden conversions happen, but as a rule men pass gradually into the kingdom of God. Between the sensual and the spiritual there is a great gulf, and it must be passed. Of the wind or weather in which you make the passage it is not for me to speak: the voyage may be long or short; but in some sort the gulf must be traversed. Conviction of sin is of the first importance: it cannot be dispensed with.

You will say, "Why?" Well, we might suggest many reasons. It will make mercy the more precious, it will excite horror of sin in the future — burnt children dread the fire, it will teach you patience, for no future trial will be

so severe as this; and it will tend to keep you persevering in holiness. But be the reasons what they may, be you sure of this, that no soul is saved without being made conscious of its own sinfulness.

**II.** We pass on to notice that it often happens that AWAKENED SOULS USE MANY INEFFECTUAL MEANS TO OBTAIN CLEANSING. Job describes himself as washing in snow water, and making his hands never so clean. His expressions remind me of my own labor in vain. By how many experiments I tried to purify my own soul! Like all my fellows, I was always foiled in every attempt. See a squirrel in a cage; the poor thing is working away, trying to mount, yet he never rises one inch higher. In like case is the sinner who seeks to save himself by his own good works, or by any other means: he toils without result. It is astonishing what pains men will take in this useless drudgery. They prevent the dawn of day in their anxiety to attend matins or observe mass; they are austere in their fastings; they say prayers without stint and do penance to the full. We should be sorry to impugn their sincerity. With what exemplary zeal many in the Anglican Church go about to establish their own righteousness! They practice ceremonies, with a claim to catholicity which no Catholic will allow. Untiring is their diligence in one department or another of amateur office, they hope for a reward for doing what God never commanded. Without a Scriptural proof of being right in anything, they would fain be righteous overmuch in everything. The labor of the foolish in spinning a righteousness of their own, that is neither accredited by the divine law nor by the holy gospel is

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almost incredible: they would rather give their bodies to be buried and their goods to feed the poor, than submit to salvation by grace, though it is the only possible salvation.

In seeking to obtain absolution of their sins, to establish a righteousness of their own, and to secure peace of mind, men tax their ingenuity to the utmost. Job talks of washing himself with snow water. The imagery is, no doubt, meant to be instructive. Why is snow water selected? The reason probably was, first, because it was hard to get. Far easier, generally, to procure water from the running brooks than from melted snow. Men set a high value on that which is difficult to procure. Whence comes it that the great majority of the so-called Christian world prefer worship conducted with gorgeous ritual and stately ceremonial? Is it not the rarity of the thing which creates a sense of value? Enter a Popish cathedral, and try, if you can, to understand the services. What are all these persons doing dressed in red and white, or those other persons in more sombre color?

Manipulations, genuflections, prostrations, waving of censers, and elevating of hosts — an array of symbolism which it took ages to conglomerate. What is the value of it all, unless it lies in its complications and expenses? Our Protestant friends have their milder predilections. Organs and orchestras serve them for snow water. In measured accents let me speak of music. For psalms and spiritual songs you all know I have an ardent passion. My spirit wings its way to the very portals of heaven in the words

and tunes of our hymns. But for your instrumental melodies I have no mind, when you substitute mere sound for heartfelt prayer and praise. The obvious simplicity of the gospel is the only outward voucher I know of for its inward sincerity. Praise is none the better because of the difficulty of the music; say rather that the more simple and congregational it is the better by far. Forms of worship which are expensive and difficult are greatly affected by many, as snow water was thought in Job's day to be a bath for kings; but, after all, it is an idle fashion, likely to mislead.

Besides, snow water enjoyed a reputation for purity. If you would have a natural filtered water gather the newly-fallen snow and melt it. The figure represents the religiousness which is of the most rigid kind — the cream of the cream. Specimens yet remain among us of piety more than possible to men, religiousness above the range of mortals; which piety is, however, not of God's grace, and consequently is a vain show. Though we should use the purest ceremonies, multiply the best of good works, and add thereto the costliest of gifts, yet we should be unable to make ourselves clean

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before God. You may wash yourself till you deny the existence of a spot, and yet you may be unclean. You may make rigid rules, and find much content in keeping them, and yet remain in nature's filthiness. With all your shrewdness you have but practiced a human device, and in refusing to trust in the Lord Jesus you have failed to observe a divine ordinance; and therefore you will fail.

Once again, this snow water is probably extolled because it descends from the clouds of heaven, instead of bubbling up from the clods of earth. Religiousness which can color itself with an appearance of the supernatural is very taking with many. Some folks are fond of apostolical succession; it professes to come from heaven. No doubt the notion originated in cloudland. Others are fascinated by Popery. His holiness the Pope is accounted to be a great cistern, full of grace, which is distilled in streams, and runs through capacious pipes called cardinals, and then through smaller tubes, styled bishops. At length by the still smaller pipes of the priests it comes to the people. No pretext was ever more paltry than this, and yet many are deceived by it. There is no peace in it for thoughtful minds. For such your snow water has no solace, because they see no connection between outward acts and the purifying of the heart.

*Not all the outward forms on earth,  
Nor rites that God has given,  
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,  
Can raise a soul to heaven."*

If I "make my hands never so clean," is an expression peculiarly racy in the original. The Hebrew word has an allusion to soap or nitre. Such was the ordinary and obvious method any one would take to whiten his hands when they were grimy. Tradition tells that certain stains of blood cleave to the floor. The idea is that human blood, shed in murder, can never be scrubbed or scraped off the boards. Thus is it most certainly with the dye of sin. The blood of souls is in thy skirts, is the terrible language of Jeremiah (Jeremiah



2:34). When ye think that baptism can begin, that confirmation can further, and that other sacraments can complete your purification, ye are mere dupes of your own folly. "Though I wash myse lf in snow water, and make myself never so clean; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." There it stands, it is the testimony of one man, but yet it is true; the Almighty attests it, and all human experience affirms it. These worthless experiments to cleanse yourselves would be ended once for all if you would have regard to the great truth of the gospel: "Without  
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shedding of blood there is no remission." "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." God alone can remove sin, and he does so by the blood of Jesus.

**III.** But AS SURE AS EVER QUICKENED BOWLS TRY TO GET PURITY IN THE WRONG WAY, GOD WILL THRUST THEM DOWN INTO THE DITCH. This is a terrible predicament. I find, on looking at the passage closely, that it means "head over ears in the ditch." It is not merely some filthy puddle in which a man treads till he is splashed all over, it is a slough of despond into which he sinks. His eyes, his ears, and his mouth, are filled with pollution; and his very clothes are so foul that he utterly abhors himself. Old Master Caryl, a rare expositor of the Book of Job, says that the original can only be equalled in English by the expression — we would not touch such an one with a pair of tongs.

Often it happens with those who try to get better by their own good works, that their conscience is awakened by the effort, and they are more conscious of sin than ever. If a chosen man strives to save himself from his sins by his own righteousness the Lord permits him to see his own heart and he ceases from all glorying. The word here rendered "ditch" is elsewhere translated "corruption." So in the sixteenth Psalm: "Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Language cannot paint abasement, reproach, or ignominy in stronger terms. "THOU shalt plunge me in the ditch." Is it not as though God himself would undertake the business of causing his people to know that by their vain ablutions they were making themselves yet more vile in his eyes? We read, in the second chapter of Jeremiah, of God's remonstrance with Judah: "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God. How canst thou say, I am not polluted?" May we not regard this as the discipline of our Heavenly Father's love, albeit when passing through the trial we do not perceive it to be so? Thus, in the apocalyptic epistle to the church at Laodicea, expostulation more severe or more tender it would be hard to imagine- "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." Mark the gentle words, "I counsel thee," addressed to a  
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people whose lukewarmness excited nausea! Then follows a sentence of encouragement so sweet and enchanting that it almost sounds like an apology for the fierceness of the former censure. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." A revelation of wretched sinfulness ends in a declaration of love and a visit of grace; for the Lord goes on to say, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." Anyhow, the Lord will end the conceit which is the source of the lukewarmness: he cannot permit his chosen to remain in self-righteous pride; for that his soul hateth.

Perhaps, my friend, the experience I am trying to describe will come to you through the preaching of the Word. This sermon may dishearten and distract you. Your hope was thriving like a plant. This sermon shrivels every leaf; and though, at the scent of water, the branch of self-righteousness will bud again, the next sermon you hear may wither even the stem of your confidence. If another sermon soon afterwards cuts it down to the very root, the ministry will be profitable to you; for the root of pride must be cut up. Believe me, this is mild treatment: I trust you may not be left to severer methods.

Frequently our great Lord leaves a poor wayward soul to eat the fruits of its own ways, and this is the severest form of plunging in the ditch. While striving after righteousness in a wrong way, the man stumbles into the very sin against which he struggled. The young man, of whom I am now thinking, resolved, by the help of God, that he would be different henceforth from what he ever had been. His vows kept pace with his devotions. He started them at early morn —

*"And felt, good, easy man, full surely  
His goodness was a-ripening."*

To the shop he went, as was his wont; but his thoughts were no longer set on earthly things: he stood, as he supposed, on heavenly ground. Because he had taken snow-water and had washed his hands, he began to think that he was singularly clean. Towards evening a temptation suddenly crossed his path. At first he resisted, but it proved a feeble fight. The argument of another young man, that it was policy to yield, availed to break the covenant he had made with his own conscience. So he was led astray to a place of amusement, where the light of God's countenance never shines. The wretchedness of his reflections on the morrow could not easily be told. He felt that his feet were fast in the miry clay, and his garments foully  
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soiled. His empty conceit might not have been dislodged from its secret lurking-place in his depraved nature without some such perilous downfall. Mayhap, there sits out yonder a good sister who has grown familiar with spiritual straits. Did you ever happen to hear of Mary Huntington, wife of William Huntington, S.S., the famous Calvinistic preacher? When he prayed for her, which he did with much affection, he confessed before God — "O Lord, I beseech thee, hear me on her behalf. Thou knowest how warmly attached she has ever been to MOSES, and what narrow and vain searches she has made in order to find out his grave, which thou, in infinite

wisdom and mercy, hast thought fit to conceal." That prayer, which was published about a century ago, is worth preserving in your memory. For that "Mary," like many worthy housewives of these days, was rather fond of collecting the rags and relics of self. If it had been possible, she would have worn at least an apron of the linsey-woolsey of self-righteousness. The Lord will not have his handmaids thus arranged: they must be quit of self altogether.

Our lives through various scenes are drawn and vexed with petty provocations. Paltry annoyances are the bane of our peace. Some of you, dear sisters, spend your years and your thoughts in a narrow circle, and I deeply sympathize with you therein. Without a wish to be great, or to enlarge your coast, you intensely desire to be good. To do your duty to the best of your ability, is your aim, and therein you are worthy of all honor. The lot of many of you is to pass much of your time in loneliness; your temptations are therefore peculiar. For many a quiet hour you have been busy with domestic employments, distracted by no acute anxiety, but cheered by much quiet meditation. At such seasons you are apt to get on good terms with yourselves. Presently the shades of evening begin to fall. Evening! of which Cowper sweetly sings:

*'Come, evening, once again, season of peace,  
Return, sweet evening, and continue long!'*

You are prepared to welcome home the husband, brother, son, who will look for his repast, and seek his well-earned repose. Possibly, my sisters, this is your season of temptation. His rough word, his needless complaint, his vacant look, when you pine for sympathy puts you about. A sense of injustice stings you. It may be very natural, but all the same it is very fatal to your sense of superior goodness. What more treacherous than one's temper? In a sudden gust of passion, you utter words of anger. How gladly

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would you recall them! but they are registered. Down into the ditch of despondency you sink. For days to come you feel that you cannot forgive yourself. Your rich mantle of righteousness after this tumble in the ditch looks mean enough to provoke your own ridicule.

Thus do we, in our different spheres, fly from this to that, and from that to the other. Some hope to cleanse away sin by a supreme effort of selfdenial, or of miraculous faith. Men dream of being clean without the blood of Jesus, they even boast of it, and yet their sin remaineth. The eye of the judgment may be deceived till we half think we are clean; but no sooner does the scale grow thin, or the light grow strong, than the conscience perceives its error and learns the lesson that no human endeavor can wash out the accursed spot. Let us not play at purification, nor vainly hope to satisfy conscience with that which renders no satisfaction to God.

Persons of sensitive disposition, and sedentary habits, are prone to seek a righteousness of inward feeling. Let me describe these good folks to you. They aim at a righteousness that renounces every fault, and they cultivate such graces as are naturally lovely, watching from moment to moment their own feelings of joy or grief. Yet these be they who get to know, with the

keenest anguish, the plague of their own hearts. How it happens is sufficiently clear. They try to live by their feelings and frames of mind; and what can be more deceitful than these sensations? Treacherous as the sea on which you sail so smoothly on sunny days, but which, at other times, wrecks your barque without mercy, your frames and feelings are not in the least to be depended on. One day you are all aglow, the flush of fervor is on your face, the next day you feel so dead and cold that prayer would freeze upon your lips. Your evidences are dark. You think you have none, and, seized with despondency, you lament that "there is no hope." Ah, me! the sin-sick soul, given to watch its own symptoms, is brought into perilous straits; trying one nostrum after another, sometimes feeling a little better, and anon feeling itself much worse. Oh, that it could turn from feeling to faith; and look steadily out of inward sensation to the work finished once for all by the Lord Jesus!

Poor Job was smitten with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. No doubt he sent for the doctor — though we are not actually told that he did so. It is likely enough that snow water was prescribed to him for a relief. His hands may not have seemed very sightly when he used it; there may, at least, have been some connection between his physician's

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prescription and his poetry, when he said, "If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean." Perfection in any one part of conduct would not secure cleanness for the rest. Washed hands would be a small matter if the boils remained over the rest of the body. This is another aspect of the same unsatisfactory expedient that I am wanting to point out to you. You are under bad treatment until you walk by faith in Jesus.

Anything short of grace will prove a mere mockery of your malady. Asa, King of Judah, was diseased in his feet. He sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians. Asa never recovered; but the Lord restored Job to perfect health. The gratuitous advice which the patriarch received in the time of his sore sickness was not worth his gratitude. Of his three friends, he said: "Ye are all physicians of no value." Then comes back the metaphor which I have repeated so often: "Yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." After all is said and done by the wisest of men the poor sinner is worse off than when they undertook his case. All is vanity till God comes in.

Let us not forget that the man who thus described his own case "was perfect and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil." Such a case is a puzzle to those who are not enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Although Job was renowned for righteousness in his generation, a gleam from God's countenance exposed the faultiness of his soul. Does this prove him to have been a hypocrite? By no means. His friends supposed him to be so, though they had no ground whatever for the suspicion: it was their rough way of solving a hard problem. If the patriarch's integrity had not been so firm, if his refinement had not been so tender, if his piety towards God had not been so invariably accompanied by his pity for his brother men; if, in a word, his character had not been so complete, his trial and his deliverance

could not have exhibited the extraordinary lesson which has interested and instructed every succeeding generation. He appears before us at first in the vigor of health, in the height of prosperity, and in the charm of good repute. But oh, the vanity of man! At a touch of God's finger, his flesh develops a festering mass of corruption; at a glance of God's eye, which searched him through and through, the total depravity of human nature at its best estate becomes apparent. "He abhors himself in dust and ashes." What next? Utter ruin? Nay, friend, it is full redemption.

**IV.** By such severe training THE AWAKENED ONE IS LED TO LOOK ALONE TO GOD FOR SALVATION, and to find the salvation he looks for. This is my last point, and I have no time left to enlarge upon it. What I want is that

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the truth may flash across your mind in a moment. There sits the man who is menaced with despair because every effort to extricate himself from the tangled web of his own strange experience has left him worse than before. Did I attempt to comfort him he would repel my kindest expressions. And why? He knows that it is God who condemns him. In a British court of justice, when the judge sums up against the prisoner, small cheer can he get from the honeyed words of his counsel. But hark — "It is God that justifieth." Whom does he justify? The ungodly. He first condemns them in their own consciences; and then he justifies them according to his grace. If I receive the sentence of death in myself it is the earnest of deliverance in my Redeemer. My brother, has light beamed on your soul? I hope I have found you, and that the Lord has visited you with his salvation.

I want you to notice a simple fact which seems to me to have escaped your observation. When the Almighty justified Job he commended him, and pronounced a high encomium on his conduct. Whatever mistakes he made about himself or his circumstances, in one matter he was clear as a bell; He has spoken right of me, saith the Lord. (Job 42:7.) Eliphaz and his friends transgressed in this respect. Harken unto me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek it in yourselves, you are all on the wrong track. You begin below with the whole duty of man, and try to work upward: you are sure to fail. You should begin up yonder, with the righteousness of God; and then you could work downward to righteousness of daily life. God give you knowledge of salvation by grace, to the glory of his own name, and to your own sanctification, for Christ's sake! Amen.

# THE GREAT ARBITRATION CASE.

NO. 661

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*‘Neither is there any daysman betwixt us,  
that might lay his hand upon us both.’ — Job 9:33.*

THE patriarch Job, when reasoning with the Lord concerning his great affliction, felt himself to be at a disadvantage and declined the controversy, saying, ‘He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment.’ Yet feeling that his friends were cruelly misstating his case, he still desired to spread it before the Lord, but wished for a mediator, a middleman, to act as umpire and decide the case. In his mournful plight he sighed for an arbitrator who, while dealing justly for God, would at the same time deal kindly with poor flesh and blood, being able to lay his hand upon both. But, dear friends, what Job desired to have, the Lord has provided for us in the person of his own dear Son, Jesus Christ. We cannot say with Job that there is no daysman who can lay his hand upon both, because there is now ‘one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.’ In him let us rejoice, if indeed we have an interest in him; and if we have not yet received him, may almighty grace bring us even now to accept him as our advocate and friend.

There is an old quarrel between the thrice holy God and his sinful subjects, the sons of Adam. Man has sinned; he has broken God’s law in every part of it, and has wantonly cast off from him the allegiance which was due to his Maker and his King. There is a suit against man, which was formally instituted at Sinai and must be pleaded in the Court of King’s Bench, before the Judge of quick and dead. God is the great plaintiff against his sinful creatures who are the defendants. If that suit be carried into court, it must go against the sinner. There is no hope whatever that at the last

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tremendous day any sinner will be able to stand in judgment if he shall

leave the matter of his debts and obligations towards his God unsettled until that dreadful hour. Sinner, it would be well for thee to “agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way,” for if thou be once delivered up to the great Judge of all the earth, there is not the slightest hope that thy suit can be decided otherwise than to thine eternal ruin. “Weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth,” will be the doom adjudged thee for ever, if thy case as before the living God shall ever come to be tried at the fiery throne of absolute justice. But the infinite grace of God proposes an arbitration, and I trust there are many here who are not anxious to have their suit carried into court, but are willing that the appointed daysman should stand betwixt them and God, and lay his hand upon both, and propose and carry out a plan of reconciliation. There is hope for thee, thou bankrupt sinner, that thou mayest yet be at peace with God. There is a way by which thy debts may yet be paid; that way is a blessed arbitration in which Jesus Christ shall stand as the daysman. Let me begin by describing the essentials of an arbitrator, or daysman; then let me take you into the arbitrator’s court and show you his proceedings; and then for a little time, if there be space enough, let us dwell upon the happy success of our great Daysman.

**I.** First of all, let me describe what are THE ESSENTIALS OF AN UMPIRE, AN ARBITRATOR, OR A DAYSMAN.

The first essential is, that both parties should be agreed to accept him. Let me come to thee, thou sinner, against whom God has laid his suit, and put the matter to thee. God has accepted Christ Jesus to be his umpire in his dispute. He appointed him to the office, and chose him for it before he laid the foundations of the world. He is God’s fellow, equal with the Most High, and can put his hand upon the Eternal Father without fear, because he is dearly beloved of that Father’s heart. He is “very God of very God,” and is in no respect inferior to “God over all, blessed for ever.” But he is also a man like thyself, sinner. He once suffered, hungered, thirsted, and knew the meaning of poverty and pain. Nay, he went farther, he was tempted as thou hast been, and farther still, he suffered the pangs of death, as thou poor mortal man wilt one day have to do. Now, what thinkest thou? God has accepted him; canst thou agree with God in this matter, and agree to take Christ to be thy daysman too? Does foolish enmity possess thee, or does grace reign and lead thee to accept Emmanuel, God with us,

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as umpire in this great dispute? Let me say to thee that thou wilt never find another so near akin to thee, so tender, so sympathetic, with such bowels of compassion towards thee. Love streamed from his eyes in life, and poured from his wounds in death. He is “the express image” of Jehovah’s person, and you know that Jehovah’s name is “Love.” “God is love,” and Christ is love. Sinner, has divine grace brought thee to thy senses? Wilt thou accept Christ now? Art thou willing that he should take this case into his hands and arbitrate between thee and God? for if God accepteth him, and thou accept him too, then he has one of the first qualifications for

being a daysman.

But, in the next place, both parties must be fully agreed to leave the case entirely in the arbitrator's hands. If the arbitrator does not possess the power of settling the case, then pleading before him is only making an opportunity for wrangling, without any chance of coming to a peaceful settlement. Now God has committed "all power" into the hands of his Son. Jesus Christ is the plenipotentiary of God, and has been invested with full ambassadorial powers. He comes commissioned by his Father, and he can say in all that he does towards sinners, that his Father's heart is with him. If the case be settled by him, the Father is agreed. Now, sinner, does grace move thy heart to do the same? Wilt thou agree to put thy case into the hands of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man? Wilt thou abide by his decision? Wilt thou have it settled according to his judgment, and shall the verdict which he gives stand absolute and fast with thee? If so, then Christ has another essential of an arbitrator; but if not, remember, though he may make peace for others, he will never make peace for thee; for this know, that until the grace of God has made thee willing to trust the case in Jesus's hands, there can be no peace for thee, and thou art wilfully remaining God's enemy by refusing to accept his dear Son.

Further, let us say, that to make a good arbitrator or umpire, it is essential that he be a fit person. If the case were between a king and a beggar, it would not seem exactly right that another king should be the arbitrator, nor another beggar; but if there could be found a person who combined the two, who was both prince and beggar, then such a man could be selected by both. Our Lord Jesus Christ precisely meets the case. There is a very great disparity between the plaintiff and the defendant, for how great is the gulf which exists between the eternal God and poor fallen man! How is this to be bridged? Why by none except by one who is God and who at the same time can become man. Now the only being who can do this is Jesus

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Christ. He can put his hand on thee, stooping down to all thine infirmity and thy sorrow, and he can put his other hand upon the Eternal Majesty, and claim to be co-equal with God and co-eternal with the Father. Dost thou not see, then, his fitness? Surely it were the path of wisdom, sinner, to accept him at once as the arbitrator in the case. See how well he understands it! I should not do to be an arbitrator in legal cases, because, though I should be anxious to do justice, yet I should know nothing of the law of the case, But Christ knows your case, and the law concerning it, because he has lived among men, and has passed through and suffered the penalties of justice. There cannot surely be a better skilled or more judicious daysman than our blessed Redeemer.

Yet there is one more essential of an umpire, and that is, that he should be a person desirous to bring the case to a happy settlement. If you appoint a quarrelsome arbitrator, he may delight to "set dogs by the ears;" but if you elect one who is anxious for the good of both, and wishes to make both friends, then he is just the very man, though, to be sure, he would be a man of a thousand, very precious when found, but very hard to discover. Oh



that all law-suits could be decided by such men, In the great case which is pending between God and the sinner, the Lord Jesus Christ has a sincere anxiety both for his Father's glory and for the sinner's welfare, and that there should be peace between the two contending parties. It is the life and aim of Jesus Christ to make peace. He delighteth not in the death of sinners, and he knows no joy greater than that of receiving prodigals to his bosom, and of bringing lost sheep back again to the fold. You cannot tell how high the Savior's bosom swells with an intense desire to make to himself a great name as a peace-maker. Never had warrior such ambition to make war and to win victories therein, as Christ has to end war, and to win thereby the bloodless triumphs of peace. From the heights of heaven he came leaping like a young roe down to the plains of earth. From earth he leaped into the depths of the grave; then up again at a bound he sprang to earth, and up again to heaven; and still he resteth not, but presseth on in his mighty work to ingather sinners, and to reconcile them unto God; making himself a propitiation for their sins.

Thou seest then, sinner, how the case is. God has evidently chosen the most fitting arbitrator. That arbitrator is willing to undertake the case, and thou mayest well repose all confidence in him; but and if thou shalt live and die without accepting him as thine arbitrator, then, the case going against thee, thou wilt have none to blame but thyself. When the everlasting

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damages shall be assessed against thee in thy soul and body for ever, thou shalt have to curse only thine own folly for having been the cause of thy ruin. May I ask you to speak candidly? Has the Holy Ghost so turned the natural bent and current of your will, that you have chosen him because he has first chosen you? Do you feel that Christ this day is standing before God for you? He is God's anointed; is he your elected? God's choice pitches upon him, does your choice agree therewith? Remember, where there is no will towards Christ, Christ as yet exercises no saving power. Christ saves no sinner who lives and dies unwilling. He makes unwilling sinners willing before he speaks a word of comfort to them. It is the mark of our election as his people, that we are made willing in the day of God's power. Lay your hope where God has laid your help, namely, on Christ. mighty to save. You cannot have an arbitrator except both sides be agreed. Dost thou say ay, ay, with all my soul I choose him? Then let us proceed.

**II.** And now I shall want, by your leave, to TAKE YOU INTO THE COURT WHERE THE TRIAL IS GOING ON, AND SHOW YOU THE LEGAL PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE GREAT DAYSMAN.

"The man, Ch rist Jesus," who is "God over all, blessed for ever," opens his court by laying down the principles upon which he intends to deliver judgment, and those principles I will now try to explain and expound. They are two-fold-first, strict justice; and secondly, fervent love.

The arbitrator has determined that let the case go as it may there shall be full justice done, justice to the very extreme, whether it be for or against

the defendant. He intends to take the law in its sternest and severest aspect, and to judge according to its strictest letter. He will not be guilty of partiality on either side. If the law says that the sinner shall die, the arbitrator declares that he will judge that the sinner shall die; and if, on the other hand, the defendant can plead and prove that he is innocent, he intends to adjudge to him the award of innocence, namely ETERNAL LIFE. If the sinner can prove that he has fairly won it, he shall have his due. Either way, whether it be in favor of the plaintiff or of the defendant, the condition of judgment is to be strict justice.

But the arbitrator also says that he will judge according to the second rule, that of fervent love. He loves his Father, and therefore he will decide on nothing that may attain his honor or disgrace his crown. He so loves God, the Eternal One, that he will suffer heaven and earth to pass away sooner than there shall be one blot upon the character of the Most High. On the

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other hand, he so loves the poor defendant, man, that he will be willing to do anything rather than inflict penalty upon him unless justice shall absolutely require it. He loves man with so large a love that nothing will delight him more than to decide in his favor, and he will be but too glad if he can be the means

happily establishing peace between the two. How these principles are to meet, will be seen by and by. At present he lays them down very positively. "He that ruleth among men must be just." An arbitration must be just; or else he is not fit to hold the scales in any suit. Or the other hand, he must be tender; for his name, as God, is love; and his nature as man is gentleness and mercy. Both parties should distinctly consent to these principles. How can they do otherwise? Do they not commend themselves to all of you? Let justice and love unite if they can.

Having thus laid down the principles of judgment, the arbitrator next calls upon the plaintiff to state his case. Let us listen while the great Creator speaks: may God give me grace now reverently to state it in his name, as one poor sinner stating God's case against us all. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward." The Eternal God charges us, and let me confess at once most justly and most truly charges us, with having broken all his commandments-some of them in act, some of them in word, all of them in heart, and thought, and imagination. He charges upon us, that against light and knowledge we have chosen the evil and forsaken the good; that knowing what we were doing we have turned aside from his most righteous law and have gone astray like lost sheep, following the imaginations and devices of our own hearts. The great Plaintiff claims that inasmuch as we are his creatures we ought to have obeyed him, that

inasmuch as we owe our very lives to his daily care we ought to have rendered him service instead of disobedience, and to have been his loyal subjects instead of turning traitors to his throne. All this, calmly and dispassionately, according to the great Book of the law, is laid to our charge before the Daysman. No exaggeration of sin is brought against us. It is simply declared of us that the whole head is sick and the whole heart is

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faint; that there is none that doeth good, no, not one; that we have all gone out of the way, and altogether become unprofitable. This is God's case. He says, 'I made this man; curiously was he wrought in the lowest parts of the earth; and all his members bear traces of my singular handiwork. I made him for my honor, and he has not honored me. I created him for my service, and he has not served me. Twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years I have kept the breath in his nostrils; the bread he has eaten has been the daily portion of my bounty; his garments are the livery of my charity; and all this while he has neither thought of me, his Creator and Preserver, nor done anything in my service. He has served his family, his wife and children, but his Maker he has despised. He has served his country, his neighbors, the borough in which he dwells; but I who made him, I have had nothing from him. He has been an unprofitable servant unto me.' I think I may put the plaintiff's case into your hands. Which of you would keep a horse, and that horse should yield you no obedience? What excuse is it that though I might not use him he would carry another? Nay, the case is worse than this. Not only has man done nothing, but worse than nothing. Which of you would keep a dog, which, instead of fawning upon you, would bark at you—fly at you, and tear you in his rage? Some of us have done this to God; we have perhaps cursed him to his face; we have broken his sabbaths, laughed at his gospel, and persecuted his saints. You would have said of such a dog, let it die. Wherefore should I harbour in my house a dog that treats me thus? Yet, hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth; God has borne with your ill manners, and he still cries 'forbear.' He puts the lifted thunder back into the arsenal of his dread artillery. I wish I could state the case as I ought. My lips are but clay; and these words should be like fire in the sinner's soul. When I meditated upon this subject alone, I felt much sympathy with God, that he should have been so ill treated; and whereas some men speak of the flames of hell as too great a punishment for sin, it seems ten thousand marvels that we should not have been thrust down there long ago.

The plaintiff's case having thus been stated the defendant is called upon by the Daysman for his; and I think I hear him as he begins. First of all the trembling defendant sinner pleads—"I confess to the 'indictment, but I say I could not help it. I have sinned, it is true, but my nature was such that I could not well do otherwise; I must lay all the blame of it to my own heart; my heart was deceitful and my nature was evil.'" The Daysman at once rules that this is no excuse whatever, but an aggravation, for inasmuch as it

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is conceded that the man's heart itself is enmity against God, this in an

admission of yet greater malice and blacker rebellion. It was only alleged against the offender in the first place that he had outwardly offended; but he acknowledges that he does it inwardly, and confesses that his very heart is traitorous against God, and is fully set upon working the King's damage and dishonor. It is determined, therefore, by the Daysman that this excuse will not stand, and he gives a case in point:-a thief is brought up for stealing, and he pleads that his heart was thievish, that he felt a constant inclination to steal, and that therefore he could not help running off with any goods within his reach. The judge very properly answers, "Then I shall give you twice as much penalty as any other man who only fell into the fault by surprise, for according to your own confession, you are a thief through and through; what you have said is not an excuse, but an aggravation."

Then the defendant pleads in the next place that albeit he acknowledges the facts alleged against him, yet he is no worse than other offenders, and that there are many in the world who have sinned more grievously than he has done. He says he has been envious, and angry, and worldly, and covetous, and has forgotten God; but then he never was an adulterer, or a thief, or a drunkard, or a blasphemer, and he pleads that his lesser crimes may well be winked at, But the great Daysman at once turns to the Statute Book, and says that as he is about to give his decision by law that plea is not at all tenable, for the law book has it-"Cursed is every man that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." The offense of one sinner doth not excuse the offense of another; and the arbitrator declares that he cannot mix up other cases with the case now in hand; that the present offender has on his own confession broken the law, and that as the law book stands that is the only question to be decided, for "the soul that sinneth it shall die," and if the defendant has no better plea to offer, judgment must go against him.

The sinner urges further, that though he has offended, and offended very greatly and grievously, yet he has done a great many good things. It is true he did not love God, but he always went to chapel. It is true he did not pray, but still he belonged to a singing-class. It is quite correct that he did not love his neighbor as himself, but he always liked to relieve the poor. But the Daysman, looking the sinner fall in the face, tells him that this plea also is bad, for the alleged commission of some acts of loyalty will not make compensation for avowed acts of treason. "Those things," saith he, 822

"ye ought to have done, but not to have left the others undone;" and he tells the sinner, with all kindness and gentleness, that straining at a gnat does not exonerate him for having swallowed a camel; and that having tithed mint, and anise, and cummin, is no justification for having devoured a widow's house. To have forgotten God is in itself a great enormity; to have lived without serving him is a crime of omission so great, that whatever the sinner may have done on the contra, stands for nothing at all, since he has even then in that case done only what he ought to have done. You see at once the justice of this decision. If any of you were to say to

your grocer, or tailor, when they send in their bills, "Well, now, you ought not to ask for payment of that account, because I did pay you another billyou ought not to ask me to pay for that suit of clothes, because I did pay you for another suit;" I think the answer would be, "But in paying for what you had before, you only did what you ought to do; but I still have a demand upon you for this." So all the good deeds you have ever done are only debts discharged which were most fully due, (supposing them to be good deeds, which is very questionable) and they leave the great debt still untouched.

The defendant has no end of pleas, for the sinner has a thousand excuses; and finding that nothing else will do, he begins to appeal to the mercy of the plaintiff, and says that for the future he will do better. He confesses that he is in debt, but he will run up no more bills at that shop. He acknowledges that he has offended, but he vows he will not do so again. He is quite sure that the future shall be as free from fault as angels are from sin. Though it is true that he just now said his heart was bad, still he feels inclined to think that it is not so very bad after all; he is conceited enough to think that he can in the future keep himself from committing sin; thereby, you see, admitting the worthlessness of his former plea on which he relied so much "Now," he says, "if for life I become a teetotaller, then surely I may be excused for having been a drunkard; suppose now that I am always honest and steady, and never again say one ill word, will not that exonerate me from all my wrong-doings, and for having blasphemed God?" But the Daysman rules, still with kindness and gentleness, that the greatest imaginable virtue in the future will be no recompense for the sin of the past; for he finds in the lawbook no promise whatever made to that effect: but the statute runs in these words, "He will by no means spare the guilty;" "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

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You would think that the defendant would now be fairly beaten, but he is not: he asks leave to step across the way to bring in a friend of his. He is allowed to do so, and comes back with a gentleman dressed in such a queer style, that, if you had not sometimes seen the like in certain Puseyite Churches, you would suppose him to have arrayed himself for the mere purpose of amusing children at a show, where a merry-andrew is the presiding genius. The defendant seems to imagine that if the case be left to this gentleman in the white shirt and ribbons, he will settle it with ease. He has with him a little bottle of water, by which he can turn hearts of stone into flesh, making heirs of wrath into "members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven." He has a certain portion of mystical bread, and magical wine, the reception with which he can work wonderful transformation, producing flesh and blood therefrom at his reverence's will and pleasure. In fact, this gentleman trades and gets his living by the prosecution of magic. He has occult influences streaming from his fingers, which influences he derived originally from a gentleman in lawn; and he now pretends to have ability derived from the apostles, most

probably from Judas, by marvellous manipulations-how I cannot tell you, but by a kind of sleight of hand-to settle the case, But the Daysman, with a frown, hurls a thunderbolt from his hand against the impudent impostor, and bids him take himself away, and not again deceive poor sinners with his vain pretensions. He warns the defendant that the priest is an arrant knave, that whatever professions he may make of being a "successor of the apostles," he knows nothing about apostolical doctrine, or else he would not have intruded his sinful, silly self, between men's souls and God. He bids him advise the man to dress himself like a person in his right mind, who was about honest work, and not as a necromancer or priest of Baal, and give himself to preaching the gospel, instead of propagating the superstitious inventions of Rome.

What is the poor defendant to do now? He is fairly beaten this time. He falls down on his knees, and with many tears and lamentations he cries, "I see how the case stands; I have nothing to plead, but I appeal to the mercy of the plaintiff; I confess that I have broken his commandments; I acknowledge that I deserve his wrath; but I have heard that he is merciful, and I plead for free and full forgiveness."

And now comes another scene. The plaintiff seeing the sinner on his knees, with his eyes full of tears, makes this reply, "I am willing at all times to deal kindly and according to lovingkindness with all my creatures; but will the

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arbitrator for a moment suggest that I should damage and ruin my own perfections of truth and holiness; that I should belie my own word; that I should imperil my own throne; that I should make the purity of immaculate justice to be suspected, and should bring down the glory of my unsullied holiness, because this creature has offended me, and now craves for mercy? I cannot, I will not spare the guilty; he has offended, and he must die! 'As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but would rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live.' Still, this 'would rather' must not be supreme. I am gracious and would spare the sinner, but I am just, and must not unsay my own words. I swore with an oath, 'The soul that sinneth shall die.' I have laid it down as a matter of firm decree, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' This sinner is righteously cursed, and he must inevitably die; and yet I love him. How can I give thee up, Ephraim? how can I make thee as Admah? How can I set thee as Zeboim? And yet, how can I put thee among the children? Would it not be a worse calamity that I should be unjust than that earth should lose its inhabitants? Better all men perish, than that the universe should lose the justice of God as its stay and shield." The arbitrator bows and says, "Even so; justice demands that the offender should die, and I would not have thee unjust."

What more does the arbitrator say? He sits still, and the case is in suspense. There stands the just and holy God, willing to forgive if it can be done without injury to the immutable principles of right. There sits the arbitrator, looking with eyes of love upon the poor, weeping, trembling sinner, and anxious to devise a plan to save him, but conscious that that plan must not

infringe upon divine justice; for it were a worse cruelty to injure divine perfections than it were to destroy the whole human race. The arbitrator, therefore, after pausing awhile, puts it thus: 'I am anxious that these two should be brought together; I love them both: I cannot, on the one hand, recommend that my Father should stain his honor; I cannot, on the other hand, endure that this sinner should be cast eternally into hell; I will decide the case, and it shall be thus: I will pay my Father's justice all it craves; I pledge myself that in the fullness of time I will suffer in my own proper person all that the weeping, trembling sinner ought to have suffered. My Father, wilt thou stand to this?' The eternal God accepts the awful sacrifice! What say you, sinner, what say you? Why, methinks you cannot have two opinions. If you are sane-and may God make you sane-you will melt with wonder. You will say, 'I could not have thought this! I never

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called in a daysman with an expectation of this! I have sinned, and he declares that he will suffer; I am guilty, and he says that he will be punished for me!"

Yes, sinner, and he did more than say it, for when the fullness of time came-you know the story. The officers of justice served him with the writ, and he was taken from his knees in the garden of Gethsemane away to the court, and there he was tried and condemned; and you know how his back was scourged till the white bones stood like islands of ivory in the midst of a crimson sea of gore; you know how his head was crowned with thorns, and his cheeks were given to those who plucked off the hair! Can you not see him hounded through the streets of Jerusalem, with the spittle of the brutal soldiery still upon his unwashed face, and his wounds all unstanched and bleeding? Can you not see him as they hurl him down and fasten him to the accursed tree?-then they lift the cross and dash it down into its socket in the earth, dislocating every bone, tearing every nerve and sinew, filling his soul as full of agony as this earth is full of sin, or the depths of the ocean filled with its floods? You do not know, however, what he suffered within. Hell held carnival within his heart. Every arrow of the infernal pit was discharged at him, and heaven itself forsook him. The thunderbolts of vengeance fell upon him, and his Father hid his face from him till he cried in his agony, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And so he suffered on, and on, and on, till "It is finished" closed the scene.

Here, then, is the arbitration. Christ himself suffers; and now I have to put the query, "Hast thou accepted Christ?" O dear friend, if thou hast, I know that God the Holy Ghost has made thee accept him; but if thou hast not, what shall I call thee? I will not upbraid thee, but my heart would weep over thee. How canst thou be so mad as to forego a compromise so blessed, an arbitration so divine! Oh! kiss the feet of the Daysman; love him all thy life, that he has decided the case so blessedly.

### **III.** Let us now look at THE DAYSMAN'S SUCCESS.

For every soul who has received Christ, Christ has made a full atonement

which God the Father has accepted; and his success in this matter is to be rejoiced in, first of all, because the suit has been settled conclusively. We have known cases go to arbitration, and yet the parties have quarrelled afterwards; they have said that the arbitrator did not rule justly, or something of the kind, and so the whole point has been raised again. But O beloved, the case between a saved soul and God is settled once and for  
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ever. There is no more conscience of sin left in the believer; and as for God's Book, there is not a sin recorded there against any soul that has received Christ. I know some of our Arminian brethren rather think that the case is not settled; or they suppose that the case is settled for a time, but that it will one day come up again. Beloved, I thank God that they are mistaken. Christ has not cast his people's sins into the shallows, where they may be washed up again, but he has cast them into the depths of the sea, where they are drowned for ever. Our scape-goat has not carried our sins to the borders of the land, where they may be found again, but he has taken them away into the wilderness where, if they be searched for, they shall not be found. The case is so settled that in eternity you shall never hear of it again except as a case which was gloriously decided.

Again, the case has been settled on the best principles, because, you see, neither party can possibly quarrel with the decision. The sinner cannot, for it is all mercy to him: even eternal justice cannot, for it has had its due. If there had been any mitigation of the penalty, we might yet fear that perhaps the suit might come up again; but now that everything has been paid, that cannot be. If my creditor takes from me, by a settlement in the Court of Insolvency, ten shillings in the pound, I know he will not disturb me yet; but I cannot feel quite at ease about the other ten shillings; and if I am ever able, I should like to pay him. But, you see, Christ has not paid ten shillings in the pound, but he has paid every farthing.

*"Justice now demands no more,  
He has paid the dreadful score."*

For all the sins of all his people he has made such a full and satisfactory atonement, that divine justice were not divine justice at all if it should ask to be paid twice for the same offense. Christ has suffered the law's fullest and severest penalty, and there is now no fear whatever that the case can ever be revived, by writ of error, or removal into another court, because it has been settled on the eternal and immutable principles of justice.

Again, the case has been so settled, that both parties are well content. You never hear a saved soul murmur at the substitution of the Lord Jesus. If ever I get to see his face, I'll fall down before him and kiss the dust beneath his feet. Oh! if ever I see the Savior who has thus delivered me from ruin; if I have a crown I will cast it at his feet, and never, never wear it; it must, it shall be his. I feel like the good woman who said, that if Christ ever saved her, he should never hear the last of it; and I am sure he never shall, for I  
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will praise him as long as immortality endures, for what he has done for me. I am sure that every saved sinner feels the same. And Jehovah, on the



other side, is perfectly content. He is satisfied with his dear Son. "Well done!" he saith to him. He has received him to the throne of glory, and made him to sit at his right hand, because he is perfectly content with the great work which he has accomplished.

But, what is more and more wonderful still, both parties have gained in the suit. Did you ever hear of such a law-suit as this before? No, never in the courts of man. The old story of the two oyster-shells, you know, awarded to the plaintiff and defendant, while the oyster is eaten in court, is generally the result; but it is not so in this ease, for both the plaintiff and the defendant have won by the arbitration. What has God gained? Why, glory to himself, and such glory as all creation could not give him, such glory as the ruin of sinners, though so well-deserved, could not give him. Hark how

*'Heaven's eternal arches ring*

*With shouts of sovereign grace!'*

Angels, too, as well as those who have been redeemed, strike their harps, which they have turned afresh to a nobler strain, as they sing, "Worthy is the Lamb, and blessed is the eternal God!" And, as for us, the poor defendants, why, what have we not gained? We were men before; now we are something more than Adam was. We were "a little lower than the angels" before, but now we are "lifted up far above all principalities and powers." We were God's subjects once, but this arbitration has made us his sons. We were at our very best only the possessors of a paradise on earth, but now we are joint-heirs with Christ of a paradise above the skies. Both sides have won, and both sides must therefore be blessedly content with their glorious Daysman.

And, to conclude, through this Daysman both parties have come to be united in the strongest, closest, dearest, and fondest bond of union. This law-suit has ended in such a way that the plaintiff and the defendant are friends for life, nay, friends through death, and friends in eternity. how near God is to a pardoned sinner,

*'So near, so very near to God,*

*Nearer we cannot be;*

*For in the person of his Son,*

*We are as near as he.'*

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What a wonderful thing is that union between God and the sinner! We have all been thinking a great deal lately about the Atlantic Cable. It is a very interesting attempt to join two worlds together. That poor cable, you know, has had to be sunk into the depths of the sea, in the hope of establishing a union between the two worlds, and now we are disappointed again. But oh! what an infinitely greater wonder has been accomplished. Christ Jesus saw the two worlds divided, and the great Atlantic of human guilt rolled between. He sank down deep into the woes of man till all God's waves and billows had gone over him, that he might be, as it were, the great telegraphic communication between God and the apostate race, between the Most Holy One and poor sinners. Let me say to you, sinner, there was no failure in the laying down of that blessed cable. It went down

deep; the end was well secured, and it went down deep into the depths of our sin, and shame, and woe; and on the other side it has gone right up to the eternal throne, and is fastened there eternally fast, by God himself. You may work that telegraph to-day, and you may easily understand the art of working it too. A sigh will work it; a tear will work it. Say, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and along the wire the message will flash, and will reach God before it comes from you. It is swifter far than earthly telegraphs; ay, and there will come an answer back much sooner than you ever dream of, for it is promised-"Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear." Who ever heard of such a communication as this between man and man; but it really does exist between sinners and God, since Christ has opened up a way from the depths of our sin to the heights of his glory.

This is for you who are at a distance from him, but he has done more for us who are saved, for he has taken us right across the Atlantic of our sin and set us down on the other side; he has taken us out of our sinful state, and put us into the Father's bosom, and there we shall dwell for ever in the heart of God as his own dear children.

I would to God that some might now be led to look to the Savior, that some would come with weeping and with tears to him, and say,

*"Jesus lover of my soul,  
Let me to thy bosom fly."*

Take my case, and arbitrate for me; I accept thine atonement; I trust in thy precious blood; only receive me and I will rejoice in thee for ever with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

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May the Lord bless you evermore. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.-Isaiah 53.***

# THREE BLESSINGS OF THE HEAVENLY CHARTER.

NO. 2314

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 25TH, 1893,  
*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD'S -DAY EVENING, JUNE 16TH, 1889.

*"Thou hast granted me life and favor, and thy visitation hath  
preserved my spirit." — Job 10:12.*

IT is well sometimes to sit down, and take a grateful review of all that God has done for us, and with us, from our first day until now. We must not be like hogs under the oak, that eat the acorns, but never thank the tree, or the Lord who made it to grow. We must not receive the dew, and yet never think of the heaven from which it comes. To be ungrateful, is to be unmanly; to be ungrateful to God, is to commit high treason against the majesty of his goodness. I think that an hour would be well spent, by any person here, in sitting quite alone, and going over his autobiography. Turn over the pages of your diary; if you have none written, turn over the pages of your memory, and think of all that God has done for you from the day when you hung upon your mother's breast until the present moment.

*'Streams of merc y, never ceasing,*

*Call for songs of loudest praise.”*

But God does not hear the songs of praise because we let the streams of mercy glide by unnoticed. Far too often, we —

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*‘Let his mercies lie*

*Forgotten in unthankfulness,*

*And without praises die.’*

We do not even put a tombstone over their graves; but let them lie as dead things, uncared for, forgotten, out of mind.

If there is any time when it is unlikely for us to think of God’s mercies, but when it would be specially wise for us to do so, if there is one time more unlikely than another, it is when we are in great trouble. Here is poor Job, covered with sore boils, sitting on a dunghill, scraping himself with a bit of a broken pot, with his children dead, his property destroyed, and even his wife not giving him a word of comfort, and his friends acting in a most unfriendly manner. Now it is that he talks to his God, and says, “Thou hast granted me life and favor, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit.” You are very ill; think of the time when you were well. You are poor; remember when you washed your feet in milk, and your steps with butter, and had more than heart could wish. Friends have forsaken you; recollect when you had plenty of friends. “Oh!” say you, “that will be rubbing salt into the wound.” No, no, I trust not. You will remember that you were not always unhappy, that you were not always full of pain; God has spared your life, and given you many favors. If you do not feel that you can bless him for the present moment, yet forgot not to bless him for the past; and when you once begin to do that, you will soon find that your praise will overlap the past, and cover the present, if it does not even run into the future. Only begin to praise God, and you will find that he who praises God for mercy will never be long without a mercy for which to praise him. I therefore invite those of you who are sad to-night to think of God’s past goodness; and, as I trust that the larger proportion here will not be found in that condition, I urge you to lead the way in taking a happy retrospect to-night of all that God has done for you in providence and grace.

Job gives us here a charter with three blessings in it; “Thou hast granted me life and favor, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit.” These are choice favors; as we dwell upon them, may our hearts gratefully bless God for all that he has done for us!

**I.** The first blessing of this heavenly charter is LIFE: “Thou hast granted me life.”

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Well, I think that we ought to thank God that we have lived at all. I know the pessimist version of the psalm of life is that, “‘Tis something better not to be.” Perhaps it would have been something better if that gentleman had not been, better, I should think, for his wife and family if they had not had to live with such a miserable creature. But the most of us thank God for our being, as well as for our wellbeing. We count it something not to be

stones, or plants, or “dumb, driven cattle.” We are thankful to be intelligent beings, with powers of thought, and capable of mental and spiritual enjoyment. Truly, O Lord, it is no small thing to be, even to be a man; for what is man? Well, with all his sin, yet as thou didst make him, when he had no sin, he was but a little lower than the angels, and thou didst make him to have dominion over all the works of thy hands. Thou hast made him immortal. Thou hast made him a king; thou hast crowned him with glory and honor: and if he does but know his destiny, and work it out aright, thou hast made him to be glorified with thyself; thou hast made him to stand even higher than the angels now that thou hast redeemed him, for he has tasted of a love which unfallen angels could not know. If you choose to make your being to be your eternal curse, why, you must do it, I suppose; but not without our tears; but if you are rational beings, and use your reason reasonably, you will thank God that you live, and pray that your life may always be a blessing to you.

But we also thank God that we have lived on in spite of many perils. There are some here who ought very much to thank God that they live on after the perils through which they have passed. It was something to find ourselves alive after the terrible thunderstorm of the week before last. It is something to be alive after an earthquake, or a tremendous storm at sea, or to be alive in the midst of a pestilence, or alive after a battle, to be alive after some fearful accident, to be alive, I say, when there are so many gates to the grave.

*‘The rising morning can’t assure  
That we shall end the day;  
For death stands ready at the door  
To take our lives away.’*

And yet, despite all these things, we are still here. Some of you, not long ago, were very ill; it was thought that you would die; you thought so yourself, you were brought very low; and yet here you are. While others have died, you are still spared. You went hard by the gates of death, and seemed to look into eternity for a while; but you were allowed to pass on,  
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and you are yet among the living, to praise God, as I hope you are doing this very day. Yes, it is God’s grace that has granted us life. I find that, in the Hebrew, it reads, “lives” as if we had several lives, as though, if we had not had many lives, we should not have had any life at this moment. But life upon life has come to us, like wave upon wave at sea; and whereas one might have washed us on the shore of death, another has carried us back to the sea of life again, and still we live.

I am addressing some from whom our text asks for gratitude because they are alive notwithstanding constitutional weakness. Perhaps from a child you were always feeble. Oftentimes you have said to yourself, “How is it that I have lived? Strong and hearty men and women have died before me; and I, who have been always ailing, find that the creaking door hangs long on its hinges.” Well, do not creak more than you can help; but bless God that you are not taken off the hinges. It is really very marvellous how some

live even to old age when every day they seem to be on the very verge of departure. We account for their continued life by this fact, that they can say with Job, "Thou hast granted me life." Let us praise God, then, even if we can only do it with a feeble tongue, for it is something still to live.

And I am speaking to a great many here to whom this text should commend itself because they have lived so long. I suppose that, in no other place in London, or perhaps in the world, is there so large a number of old men and women gathered together as in this Tabernacle. One is often struck with the snow that lies about this place on the heads of so many. Do not blame us for getting old. We were all young together; and I remember that many here were introduced into the church as young men and young women. Nearly forty years ago they said of me, "He takes into the church a parcel of boys and girls." Well, they have been cured of that fault, if it was a fault, long ago; and now, perhaps, some will complain that they are old. We do not complain; we are so much nearer heaven; but when I look upon some dear friends here, who have passed even their four-score years, who have quite run out their lease, and now are living upon sufferance, as I trust they may for years to come, and when I remember what a poor tottering fabric this tent-body of ours is, I am amazed that we still live on.

*'Our life contains a thousand springs,  
And dies if one be gone;  
Strange that a harp of thousand strings  
Should keep in tune so long.'*

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Yet it has kept in tune so long, and we ought to bless God to-night, those of us who are somewhere between fifty and a hundred, and others who are somewhere between sixty and two hundred, ought to bless God to-night that they have been spared so long, and say, in the language of the text, "Thou hast granted me life and favor." You need not be frightened about that two hundred that I mentioned; you will not any of you be likely to reach that figure. If any of us live for a century, we shall have done exceedingly well; we may thank God if we do not live as long as that, for, while it is well to live here, it is better for us, after all, before our infirmities multiply, to be up and away to our Father's house above.

Think of this a little longer, "Thou hast granted me life." You have thought of the perils through which you have passed, and the weaknesses that you have survived. Now think, beloved friends, of the sin which might have provoked God to make an end of such a guilty life. Am I not speaking to some here who have lived without any thought of God, their Maker? Up till this time, God has fed you, and preserved you in being, and yet you have not even given him a thought. It is a wonderful thing that he should have spared your life in the midst of such wicked ingratitude. Perhaps, my friend, — I hope it is not so, — but perhaps you have been worse than this, and that mouth of yours has uttered blasphemies, and the members of your body have been given over to uncleanness. If you will look back to-night, it will be a wonder to you, that you, perhaps professedly an atheist, possibly a drunkard, it may be setting an ill example to wife and children, and doing

evil on all sides, have been spared. One seems to say, "Cut down that upas tree, it drips with poison;" but God puts by the axe, and he still spares you. Did you not this very day imprecate a curse upon yourself, and yet the curse has not come? There was a tract that used to be given away, and which did much good; it was called, "The Swearer's Prayer." If every swearer would look upon his dreadful imprecation as a prayer, for such it is, he might well wonder that God has not, long ago, blasted him, as he has said, like some oak of the forest, that we have seen struck by lightning, standing there with its stag's -horn branches high in the air, a monument of what divine judgment can do. God has granted you life, yet nothing in that life has been pleasing to him, or good for your fellow-men. Thank him that he has not yet cut you down as a cumberer of the ground.

But even if I speak to the best man and woman here, to those who have tried to be useful, and are endeavoring to be holy, yet, dear friends, what poor failures we are after all! There is not one of us who can boast; we  
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have to lay our hands upon our mouths, and bow ourselves into the very dust. Truly, Lord, thou hast let us live, although we have done so little, and done that little so faultily; we can to-night praise thee, and each one say, "Thou has granted me life."

I might thus continue to show you that our preservation in life is a theme for great gratitude: "Thou has granted me life." But if we can say this in a higher sense, "Thou hast granted me life," spiritual life, how much greater should our gratitude be! I could not even feel the guilt of sin, I was so dead; but thou hast granted me life to repent. I could not look to Jesus as my Savior, and find rest in him; but thou has granted me life to believe in him. Oh, what a mercy it is to have spiritual life! I do not like to ask you whether you have it; I do not think that that ever ought to be a matter of question with anybody. A man is either alive or dead, and he must know which he is; and however faint and feeble he may be, the very feeling of faintness and feebleness is a sign of life, for the dead man does not even feel that. If, to-night, you have only life enough with which to groan, to weep, and to cry to God, thank God for it, and say, "Then hast granted me life;" but if you have that little life, do not be satisfied with it. Pray to have life more abundantly, that you may come to joy and peace through believing, that you may have the full assurance of faith, that you may be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, that you may tread down sin, and may serve the Lord in your day and generation, and bring hundreds and thousands to Christ. Pray that it may be so; and then, as each single increase of power comes to you, sing, in the words of the patriarch, "Thou hast granted me life." Oh, for more life! Do you feel dull and dead tonight? Cry to God to grant you life. Cry for grace, and then, when it comes, gratefully say, "Thou hast granted me life."

**II.** The second blessing of this heavenly charter is DIVINE FAVOR "Thou hast granted me life and favor."

Have you ever thought of the many favors that God has bestowed upon you, even upon some of you who as yet have never tasted of his grace? What a favor it is to many to be sound in body! Dear friends are here tonight, who have not seen the light of the sun for many a day. God is gracious to them in their blindness; but do you not think that we ought to praise him for our eyesight? There are many beloved Christian friends, who used to sit on this lower platform, and around here, for although they were deaf, they could hear my voice in the preaching of the gospel, and with

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great sorrow they have come to me one by one, and said, 'I cannot even hear with the trumpet now, I am getting so deaf.' Bless God for your ears, if you still have the use of them; and take heed how you hear. Why, there is not a single faculty that God has given but what we ought to be thankful for it! When you see around you these who are crippled, those who are deprived of one limb or one sense, should you not say, 'Thou hast granted me life and favor'? They have favors, too, for which to thank God; but you have this particular favor which is denied to them. Do not fail to thank the Lord for it. It is a great mercy to have been born of good and honest parents, and not to be the inheritors of disease, as some are who are born to a life of sorrow by no fault of their own. Be grateful for your ancestry, young man, if you have sprung of good sound stock, and say, 'Thou hast granted me life and favor.' Do not go and give that body to the devil, I beseech you. Do not go and yourself plunge into vice and sin if God has restrained your ancestors from evil. By his grace, may you also be kept back, and enabled to say, 'Thou hast granted me life and favor, and I cannot sin against thy favor'!

I cannot help reminding you here of the great favor of God in the matter of soundness of mind. There is a dear friend, who has gladly heard the preaching of the gospel here, but now he has to be confined in an asylum, for it would be dangerous to have him at liberty. There is another, and we often meet with such, who seemed as cheerful and happy as any of us, but he has now sunk into deep despondency. I have often prayed God to let me go anywhere sooner than into an asylum. It seems so dreadful to lose one's reason. Be grateful that you have your senses. Surely you must be lunatics already if you do not bless God that you are not lunatics. There must be a madness in your heart if you do not thank him for sparing you from so terrible a trial. These favors are looked upon as very common things, a sound mind and a sound body; but if they were universal, they would still be mercies for which we ought specially to bless the name of the Lord. I speak to many here to whom God has also given a comfortable lot in life. You work, and you work pretty hard; but still you are not starved, and you are not ground to death by forced labor. There are many in this house of prayer who ought to be very grateful for the easy circumstances in which they are found. Why am I talking about these things? Why, because I want, by stirring you up to gratitude, to bind you with cords of thankfulness to God! Will you not thank him who has done so much as this for you? If you were suddenly brought into the deepest poverty, and the most painful



sickness, and did not know where to lay your heads, you would then reproach yourselves to think that, when your lives were cast in pleasant places, and you had a goodly heritage, you were not more grateful and more obedient to the God of love.

Some here, too, some few, at any rate, have been favored with much prosperity. O self-made men, do not begin to adore yourselves because you made yourselves; for if you made yourselves, you are poor sticks, I know. I would not trust myself to make myself, I should make an awful mess of myself. No, thank God for your prosperity, and devote your wealth to his service, who granted it to you. Grow not purse-proud; be not exalted above measure among your fellow-men. The more you have, the more you owe to God; therefore be humble, and be devoted to him who has treated you with so much favor.

And I may say to-night that, in this congregation, God has given you the favor of hearing the gospel; no mean favor, let me remind you. Multitudes, multitudes, multitudes are without it, perishing for lack of knowledge; and there are some who once heard the gospel who are now far removed from the sound of it. Friends who once used to join in our great assembly are now far away in those parts of South America where as yet there is no gospel teaching, or they are far away in the backwoods of America or Canada, or away in the bush in Australia, where, as yet, the message of mercy is not, at any rate, regularly brought to them; and they very much miss the means of grace. Be thankful that you have the gospel at almost every street corner; and if you are willing to hear it, you may hear it.

Still, putting all these things together, they do not come up to this last point, that many of us have received the favors of saving grace: "Thou hast granted me life and favor." The highest favors of all God has given to some of us, the favor of being chosen to be his from before the foundation of the world, the favor of being redeemed from among men, the favor of being called out by his effectual grace, the favor of being renewed in the spirit of our minds, the favor of justification, whereby we are made accepted in the Beloved, the favor of full, free, irreversible pardon, whereby our sin is blotted out for ever, the favor of a throne of grace, the favor of answered prayer, the favor of divine providence, which makes all things work together for our good, the favor of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who is with us, and shall abide in us for ever. I cannot run over the list of God's favors to his people, for it is too long. Only praise your God, each one of

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you, as you say tonight, "Thou hast granted me life and favor." Happy people, thrice-happy people, of whom this is true? If we did not praise the Lord, the stones in the street might well cry out against us.

**III.** The last blessing of the charter, upon which I shall be a little longer, is DIVINE VISITATION: "Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." Does God ever come to man? Does he not? Yes; but it is a great wonder: "What is

man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man that thou visitest him?"

May I remind some of you of how much you ought to praise God for his visitation? He visited you, first, with an arousal and conviction of sin. I remember when his Spirit came to me while I was yet a child, and made me feel a heavy burden on account of my childish sins. How I wept and cried, when alone, because I had been so guilty before God! And as a youth, that feeling still pursued me wherever I went. God visited me in the night, visited me often in the morning, when I woke up before anybody else, to read Baxter's "Call to the Unconverted", and Alleine's "Alarm", and suchlike books, over which I pored again and again, feeling the evil of my sin, and having the sword of the Spirit piercing yet more deeply into my conscience at every page I read. I thank God for those early visitations. If any of you are having them now, quench not the Spirit of God. Be glad to know your real state as sinners while you are yet young. The visitations of God, in the form of conviction, if at first they bring us under bondage, are nevertheless of the utmost value, for by these he preserves our spirit. After that first experience, there came visitations of enlightenment and conversion. Can you remember when Jesus first visited you, and brought you up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay? Does not your heart leap within you even now as you are ready to sing, —

*'Happy day! Happy day!*

*When Jesus washed my sins away'?*

Yes, God's visitations, by revealing Christ to your broken heart, preserved your spirit.

Perhaps since then you have had visitations of another kind. You have had chastisement, or you have had affliction in the house. God's visitations are sometimes very unwelcome. We dread that he should come to afflict or chastise us; and yet, in looking back upon all such experiences, I think that you can say, "Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." I saw a young sister,

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just before this service; and I said to her, "When did you find the Lord?" She replied, "It was when I was very ill." Yes, it is often so; God makes us ill in body that we may have time to think of him, and turn to him. "Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." What would become of some people if they were always in good health, or if they were always prospering? But tribulation is the black dog that goes after the stray sheep, and barks them back to the Good Shepherd. I thank God that there are such things as the visitations of correction and of holy discipline, to preserve our spirit, and bring us to Christ.

But then, dear friends, we have had other visitations, visitations of revival and restoration. Do you not sometimes get very dull and dead? Then you are glad to go and hear a sermon, or you read some godly, soul-stirring book, or you meet with some Christian friend, and you say afterwards, "Well, I do not know how it is, but I seem quite different from what I was; I have made a new departure, I have started off again." I think that some of our friends have need to do that to-night; it will not hurt any of us if we all

seem to begin again to-night, and take Jesus Christ into our heart once more, and let him come as he came at the first, and be like a new Christ to us. Let us joy and rejoice in him with our first love and our early delights. Lord, give us that visitation to-night, and revive our spirits! Oh, what visitations of joy he sometimes gives us when he comes very near to us! We do not hardly know how to bear it; we cry when the vessel gets quite full, ‘Hold, Lord, I cannot bear more of joy.’ ‘Ah!’ say you, ‘we do not know much about that experience.’ Do you not? Then, pray the Lord to visit you often, that you may know more about it.

The best of all is, when the Lord visits us, and never goes away; but stays with us always, so that we walk in the light of his countenance, and go from strength to strength, singing always, ‘Thy visitation never ended, daily continued, preserves my spirit.’ You have all heard the phrase, generally used by juries at a coroner’s inquest when a man has died suddenly, ‘Died by the visitation of God.’ No doubt some do thus die; but I want you to live by the visitation of God. That is a very different thing, and that is the only way in which we truly can live, by God’s visiting us from day to day, so preserving our spirit from the dangers that surround us. Live, then, by the visitation of God.

You are sick, my friend; your heart is sick. Sin, like a grievous disease, is destroying you. The cancer of an evil habit is eating into your very vitals.

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What is to be done with you? Nothing but that Jesus Christ the Lord should come and give you a gracious visitation, come and look you in the face, and feel your pulse, and lay his hand on your heart, and change it, and make you a new creature; and he will do all that if you send for him.

Doctors have a night-bell, you know, and a night-tube, by which they may be called in cases of urgency. Now ring God’s night-bell at once, and speak up that tube of prayer,

‘Lord, I am sick unto death; come and heal me. Come and heal me.’ Will not somebody in these pews now, without the use of a word, yet say in the silence of his heart, ‘Lord, I am sore vexed; I am sick unto death with sin; come and heal me?’ and Jesus Christ will say, ‘I will come and heal you.’

Then will you say, ‘Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit.’

You know how a farm will sometimes get smothered with weeds, and things seem to go all wrong. What is the matter? On enquiry, you find that the farmer has been out on the Continent, he has been away from his farm. Well, then, of course the farm goes wrong; but have him back again, and the farmer’s eye does more than his hand; his foot manures the ground wherever he stands; and things soon get on better. Now, if the farm of your nature has fallen into a bad state, you want the Husbandman back; you need the Lord Jesus to come and survey the estate and give directions as to what is to be done to it. He will soon set the whole place to rights. Yea, if your farm has become like a desert, bare as the palm of your hand, he can come and turn it to fertility; he can make the wilderness like Eden, and the desert like the garden of the Lord. A visitation from the Lord Jesus Christ is what we all want when we are barren and dead.

May we expect it? Yes, he came on a visit here once. We did not see him when he came, but there were some who saw him. You remember how George Herbert quaintly sings of his laying aside his azure mantle, and making the sky with it; and taking off his bright rings, and hanging them up as stars.

*‘He did descend, undressing all the way  
And when they asked what he would wear;  
He smiled, and said as he did come,  
He had new clothes a-making here below.’*

And poor clothes they were, when he was born of the Virgin, and lived in our inferior clay. He paid us a visit, but men did not let him lodge

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comfortably. There was no room for him in the inn. It was a sorry entertainment that they gave him, for they pierced his side ere he went away, and he carried with him the marks in his hands and feet that he had received in the house of his friends. Well, but still, having once come, and died on this earth, he knows the way; and as he cannot die again, he will come again; and now, to-night, in spirit, by his Spirit, he will come to you, if you only cry to him, ‘Come.’ If you cry to him, ‘Come,’ tonight, that will be only the echo of what he says, ‘Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden.’ He cries, ‘Come,’ catch up that word, and say, ‘Come.’ Echo his ‘Come’ by your own ‘Come’; and you two will meet before the service is over, though we have reached the last few minutes of it. May your ‘Come’ and Christ’s ‘Come’ blend in one! Come, Lord Jesus, even so, come quickly, and set thy poor servants free from the taint of sin, and from the dread of the wrath of God! Yes, you want a visitation from him who has come already; and beside that, he has sent his Holy Spirit to abide until he himself descends from heaven with a shout. The Holy Ghost is here in this assembly now; plead and cry to him for his visitation.

And if my Lord will come anywhere to-night, it is to you who think yourselves unfit for him to come to you, to you who would give your eyes to have him, but scarcely dare to hope that he will ever come to you. The Lord says, ‘To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.’ Do you not belong to that kind of people, trembling at God’s Word, wishing only that you dared to hope in his mercy? Come now, and cast yourselves on Jesus; come now, and trust yourselves with the great Savior, who has ascended on high, to give repentance and remission of sins, and who is ready to give both the repentance and the remission to every soul that is willing to have them. If you would have them, they are yours. Believe for eternal life. Believe now. The Lord grant you such a visitation that you may be constrained to believe, for Jesus’ sake! Amen and Amen.

## **EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.**

*PSALMS 6. AND 8.*

**Psalm 6:** Here the psalmist asks for a visit from God, for he is sick at heart, heavy and depressed. Be very thankful if that is not your case; but if it is, be very grateful that here is a prayer ready-made for you. Here you  
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are taught how to cry to God, and what to expect from him. If you are very sick and sad, you are not worse off than David was. Send for David's Physician; you cannot have a better doctor than the royal Physician. He who waited on King David is prepared to wait on you.

**1. O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger,**

'Rebuke me; it will do me good; I need it; but not in anger. Be gentle and tender with me: 'Rebuke me not in thine anger.'

**1. Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.**

'Chasten me; it may be that the rod will be very curative to me; but let not the chastening be given in thy hot displeasure. Be not very angry with thy poor sinful servant. If thou dost not turn away thy rod, yet turn away thy wrath. It is a sweet prayer. Some people cry to God about their sickness; it is much better to cry to God about the cause of it; that is to say, if it be a chastisement for sin, get rid of the sin, and the rod will then be removed.

**2. Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed.**

'Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak.' This was a sweet reason for David to urge: 'For I am weak.' He could not say, 'For I am worthy.' He would not have dared to say that. He could not say that when he said, 'Have mercy,' for mercy is for the unworthy. Justice is for the good; mercy is for those who are guilty. 'Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak: O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed.' Plead the greatness of your disease as a reason for the remedy. Do not come with your selfrighteousness; that will hinder you. Come with your sorrow and your sin, your weakness and your pain, and plead these before God.

**3. My soul is also sore vexed:**

That is worse than the bones being vexed. 'The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?'

**3. But thou, O LORD, how long?**

There is the pith of the prayer. David is troubled because God is away from him; he has lost communion with his Lord; he has got out of fellowship with his God, and here comes the most necessary cry of all: —

**4. Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake.**

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Will not that prayer suit you who are here to-night, you who are full of sin, and are heart-broken about it, and dread the wrath to come? I put this prayer into your mouths, and pray the Holy Spirit to put it into your hearts: 'Oh save me for thy mercies' sake.'

**5. For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?**

As much as to say, 'If thou lettest me die, thou wilt lose one singer out of thy earthly choir; but if thou wilt let me live, I will remember thee; I will praise thee; I will give thee thanks.' Do you feel like saying tonight, 'Lord,

if thou shalt destroy me, thou wilt gain nothing by it; but if thou wilt save me, there will be one who will give thee thanks for ever”? I have told you sometimes of that old woman who said, “If the Lord does save me, he shall never hear the last of it.” And you and I can also say that if he saves us, he shall never hear the last of it; we will praise him throughout eternity for his great salvation.

**6.** *I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim I water my couch with my tears.*

David was in a very sorry case when he wrote these words. So great was his pain, so acute his sorrow, that all the sluices of his eyes were pulled up, and he seemed to float his bed in tears, and to be like George Herbert when he wrote: —

*‘O who will give me tears? Come, all ye springs,  
Dwell in my head and eyes: come, clouds and rain:  
My grief hath need of all the watery things,  
That nature hath produced. Let every vein  
Suck up a river to supply mine eyes,  
My weary, weeping eyes, too dry for me,  
Unless they get new conduits, new supplies,  
To bear them out, and with my state agree.’*

**7.** *Mine eye is consumed because of grief;*

He had almost wept his eyes out; they grew red with his weeping, so that he could not see.

**7.** *It waxeth old because of all mine enemies.*

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His eyesight grew dim, like that of an old man. A cataract of grief had put a cataract of blindness into his eyes.

**8.** *Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity*

He wants his God to come to him, so he bids God’s enemies clear out. If we keep company with the wicked, we cannot invite God to our house, and expect him to come. “Depart from me,” says David, “all ye workers of iniquity.” “You who are singing what you call a jolly song, be off with you. You who are merry with your jokes against religion, begone far from me.”

**8.** *For the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.*

“And if he has heard my tears, I do not want you to be here. I cannot associate with God’s enemies now that he has heard the voice of my weeping.” Is not that a beautiful expression, “The voice of my weeping”? Why, there was no sound, was there? Yet there are songs without words, and there are voices without sounds.

**9.** *The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer.*

“I thought at first that he would not take my petition; but I see he stretches out his right hand, he receives my prayer; and if he receives my prayer, I shall soon receive his answer.”

**10.** *Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return and be ashamed suddenly.*

Now let us read the eighth Psalm, in which David expresses great wonder

that God, whom he had asked to visit him, should deign to do so. I think I see him sitting with his window open. It is night, and he is feeling better; and he bids them throw open the window, and he sits and looks at the stars, glad of the cool, fresh air.

**Psalm 8:1.** *O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.*

They are very high, but thy glory is higher than the heavens.

**2-4.** *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon*

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*and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?*

He, whose voice rolls the stars along, who makes those bright worlds to fly like sparks from the anvil of his omnipotence, how can he stoop so low as to regard his fallen creature, man, who is so small, so insignificant?

**5, 6.** *For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:*

Man is God's viceroy. He reigns over God's works in God's name. Let him not set up to be a king, and try to usurp the honor of his great Lord, the Emperor, the Universal Governor.

**7, 8.** *All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.*

What a king man is! Let him not be cruel to the beasts of the field; let him not be a tyrant; God did not make him for that purpose. Let his reign be generous and kind; and if the animals must suffer, yet spare them as much suffering as possible. O man, be thou a generous viceroy, for thou art under a most generous King, who is himself the happy God, and who delights in the happiness of all his creatures!

**9.** *O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!*

Thus does the psalmist finish as he began the psalm, by praising the name of the Lord.